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# CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL





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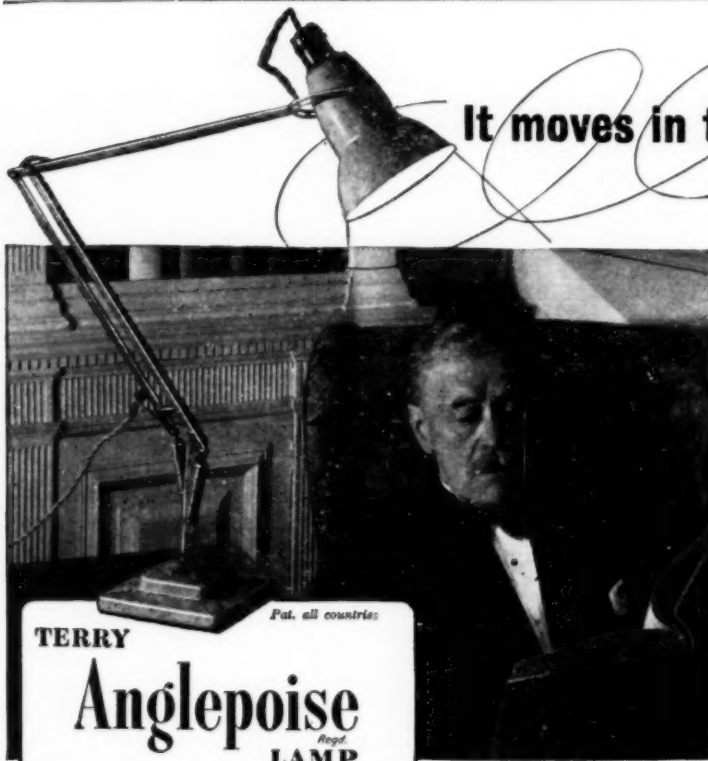
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P 1



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## *An Inside Story*

DAVID WILLIAMS

**P**HILBRICK was a boy you could always rely upon for the inside story. Whenever, in these days, I pick up one of those magazines which specialise in the exclusive personal tit-bit, and which give the impression of having been written by people at the keyhole of great events and momentous conversational interchanges, Philbrick comes there and then galumphing into the room where I'm reading, and I lose the thread of what Marshal This has apparently been saying to President That over a supper-table in Zagreb. It's perfectly possible, of course, that Philbrick is the author of the stuff—we lost sight of each other so many years ago, and somewhere and somehow, I suppose, like the rest of us, he will have to be earning his living. Wherever he is, I hope he is prospering, because ours was a friendship of that devouring, horizon-filling kind that later on in life you lose the knack of.

He enjoyed one of his greatest scoops when we were in the Third Form. He came in late one afternoon for first period. His schoolbag was humped under his arm; its strap dangled, trailing in the chalky dust behind him; his eyes were popping out of his round head. Unconcernedly he sauntered to his place be-

side me. The unconcern was in the circumstances quite normal and unsurprising, because first period that afternoon was history with Mr Parmiter; and with Mr Parmiter you came and went pretty much as you pleased, unnoticed in the general hubbub. The popping eyes, however, whilst frequent with Philbrick, were hardly normal. Certainly his eyes were large and lustrous, but they popped only when he became caught up, either as personal actor or advantageously-placed listener-in, in the thrust and excitement of important happenings.

'Guess what,' he said to me as soon as he had sat down. He leaned across the narrow gangway that separated us and spoke in a loud, peremptory voice. He had to do this because Mr Parmiter was talking resonantly about the dissolution of the monasteries, and Harker, the boy behind, was producing twanging, Jew's-harp sounds from the side of his desk.

I shook my head in a perturbed, distrait sort of way. I was never one to flout authority, even the very wobbly authority of a Parmiter. Philbrick's brazen disregard of his instructor seemed to me somehow indecent. (This was a

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very private feeling, which came over me frequently and which I was careful to keep from Philbrick and everyone else.) 'Pass me a note,' I mouthed, with my head down.

Philbrick showed his contempt for these roundabout methods by snorting loudly. This done, however, he dragged a crumpled piece of paper from his satchel and set himself, tongue between teeth, to composition. While the message was writing I gave my attention again to Mr Parmiter, whom I was finding this afternoon more confusing even than usual. Surely Cromwell's Christian name was Oliver, not Thomas? And didn't he come much later on than all this? I was about to take Mr Parmiter up on these points, when Philbrick leaned across again and pushed his stop-press news under my nose. 'At the end of term,' I read, 'the Head is going to *retyre*.'

No wonder Philbrick's eyes were popping. This was more than the dissolution of the monasteries. This was the dissolution of ordered life itself. The Head, generally remote, but now and then swooping benignly down to mingle among us, was the central arch of our universe. To us, for whom time was crowded and measureless, he spanned the centuries. He had been in the beginning, was now, and ever would be. And now, if Philbrick had got his facts right—and he usually had—the Head was to go.

As an answerer of notes, I was fluent and inventive—a gusher, if ever there was one. But this one of Philbrick's so startled me that my flow was quenched. Questions, each with innumerable supplementaries, surmises, some wild and many full of foreboding, thronged and jostled in the back of my mind; but they were all leaping to their feet at the same time, so to say, and shouting each other down so that I was left with nothing direct and immediate that I could put into words. At last, however, one consideration, so tremendously disquieting that all other clamorous voices in my head were hushed, stood alone. I turned Philbrick's crumpled piece of paper over, and began to write. 'We shall have Wart,' I wrote, and passed the paper across.

Wart was Mr McWhirter, the second master, and I supposed it inevitable that he should succeed. Wart, furthermore, was a hard, waspish, endlessly inquiring man, who drove you unremittingly and from whom no secrets could be hidden for long. With Wart as Head the place could not escape becoming a penitentiary. I glanced at Philbrick. He

had been all agog with the mindless, pleasurable excitement of news as news. My four bleak monosyllables had brought him up sharp. He sucked the end of his pen, and contemplated frowningly the harsh realities ahead. Mr Parmiter, the dissolution of the monasteries, Harker's Jew's-harp effect, some openly bad-tempered scuffling at the back of the room—all these claims on his attention he ignored. He was facing the future. Presently he wrote, crumpled the paper into a ball, and moodily flicked it on to my desk. 'Cripes and double cripes' was his message, and I recognised it immediately for what it was—at once an adequate summing-up of the situation, and a cry from the heart.

AS it turned out, I was wrong. What I—and all the rest as well as Philbrick, once they had thought about it—took for a certainty did not come to pass. The Head retired certainly, but Mr McWhirter was not translated. It was a week or two before the end of term when we were given a foretaste of the new arrangements.

Again it happened during a first period in the afternoon, and again we were threshing about under the unauthoritative eye of Mr Parmiter. The monasteries had been finally dissolved by this time, and Mr Parmiter was in the middle of some rich, retributive stuff, with people going to the stake on almost every page. 'She came to be known as "Bloody Mary",' Mr Parmiter was saying, and we were sucking in our breath noisily, tut-tutting, giving vent to some scandalised 'Oo sirs,' and generally twittering and fluttering to show our sense of shock that Mr Parmiter should come out with so horrifying an epithet, when the door opened to admit a powerful, far from elderly man, with Mr McWhirter a step or two behind. The stranger was swarthy and very tall, with sleek black hair carefully parted; a thin line of black moustache streaked cruelly across the middle of his upper lip, and small, piercing black eyes looked at us from behind rimless pince-nez.

Philbrick happened to be on his feet, in the middle of an expostulatory harangue. 'Oo, not *bloody*, sir, surely, sir? I mean, after all, sir. . . .' The speech died away as Philbrick became aware that we had visitors. We all stared at the sleek, dark man, and he stared back at us, coldly and appraisingly. Nobody seemed to know what to say. Nobody, that



## AN INSIDE STORY

is, except the stranger, who, after he had completed his examination of us, turned to Mr Parmiter, flicked a casual finger in the direction of the Form, and asked, in a loud, clear voice: 'Who is that fat, grubby boy?'

'That one, sir?' Mr Parmiter was smiling, in a vacant, embarrassed sort of way. 'Oh, that's Philbrick, sir. Philbrick, come—'

'No!' The stranger cut short Mr Parmiter's attempt to bring Philbrick out for examination. 'I think a distant view will be enough—for to-day.' Mr McWhirter cackled sycophantically, and the pair of them departed.

A strange, most un-Parmiterian hush fell upon the room as the door closed, and into it, like a bell booming across deserted marshlands in a November twilight, came flooding the immense voice of Mr Parmiter—it was only in rare moments of quiet, such as this, that we were able to realise what a really loud voice Mr Parmiter possessed—making its stupefying announcement: 'That was Mr Crick, your new Headmaster.'

'Crick,' Philbrick said to me thoughtfully at the end of the afternoon. 'It's a nasty little name, say what you like.'

'No worse than Wart,' I said, to cheer him up.

'Wart!' Philbrick snorted. 'Another of your potty ideas. I should have thought it out for myself, instead of taking your silly word for it. Of course, it couldn't have been Wart. He's miles too old. And there he was, lolling round this Crick chap like a poodle.'

'Oh well,' I persisted, 'he can't be worse than Wart'd have been.'

Philbrick considered this. 'No,' he said, rather grudgingly, and then the memory of the loud, clear voice, and the wounding question—Philbrick was very sensitive about his shape—came back to him. 'I don't know, though. With Wart we'd have known where we were. What I don't like about this is the uncertainty.'

THE next term came; the Head departed, loaded with gifts and valedictory addresses; a rather coy and simpering portrait of him was unveiled in Big School; and in strode Mr Crick. Uncertainty—Philbrick's uncertainty and everybody else's—vanished. It did not fade; it did not dwindle slowly; it vanished, as the kingdom of Oberon and Titania vanished at cockcrow—pouf!—like that. A reign of terror set in. 'You remember,' I said to Philbrick at the end of the

third week, 'the first time we saw him, when he came in that afternoon with Wart, and Parny was bellowing about Bloody Mary? A bit of an omen, really.'

'How d'you mean, omen?' Philbrick quickly lost touch when I became fanciful.

'Oh, you know. Bloody Mary, and the Protestants, and all that. We're like the Protestants, see?' I laughed, in some embarrassment. My pleasing ideas, once dissected, dismembered, and explained for Philbrick's benefit, always seemed to lose the charm they had for me, and become silly.

Philbrick stared at me owlishly. 'Haven't heard of anybody protesting much so far,' he said. 'D'you know what he did yesterday morning? Gave Pullen six of the best. Pullen! Gosh, just think of it! Went into the bar at the Grand on Saturday night, and there was Pullen, drinking ginger-ale—he said it was ginger ale—and smoking a cigarette. Took absolutely no notice at the time. Nor on Monday. But yesterday morning, as I say, swish!'

Pullen! Pullen was a prefect, and in the first fifteen. It was terrifying indeed to think that not even one so eminent could escape flattening in Crick's doom-laden, juggernaut progress through his first term. I was impressed, and at the same time a little confused. Philbrick had a way, once launched into exciting narrative, of rapping out his verbs and trusting his audience to fit them to the right subjects. I was never afraid of arresting the flow in order to get Philbrick's picture clear. 'Who went into the bar at the Grand on Saturday night?' I asked him doggedly.

All the air in Philbrick's lungs, fully inflated and ready to pursue Pullen to the last detail of his dire and bloody fate, flooded out in a noisy, exasperated gush. 'Crick, you ass,' he said. 'There was a long interval after Act 1. It was *The Arcadians*—jolly good, too. So he went into the bar. And there, as I say, was Pullen. Got his sister with him.'

'Who'd got his sister with him? Crick?' I inquired.

'Can you imagine a chap like that with a sister? No. Pullen, of course. Pullen's sister. At least, that's what he's making out.' Philbrick paused, and then added candidly: 'I wouldn't be too sure, myself. Absolutely corking girl, anyway. Old Pullen had a heart-attack, more or less, when Crick came loping in, staring round—you know the way he does. Girl was a bit worried about him, but he

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passed it off. Told her it was a kick on the head he'd got in the afternoon game. Couldn't very well tell her what it really was. Not a thing a girl'd understand. He got a grip on himself pretty quickly, anyway, thinking, of course, that Crick hadn't picked him out. Then, as I say, yesterday morning—'

'Were you there?' I interrupted again.

This time Philbrick sulked. 'Oh, was I *where*? Find things out for yourself. All you can do is barge in with daft questions.'

'In the bar at the Grand last Saturday night,' I said.

After all, I told myself, it was a perfectly fair question. It was true, of course—it had always been true, as I have been at pains to insist at the outset of this narrative—that for the inside story Philbrick was the boy to whom you naturally turned. But since the coming of Crick, Philbrick's peculiar talent had flourished, filled out, and become a plant of monstrous size. He was omniscient; he was circumstantial; he was Jonah, and Cassandra, and James Boswell, and the Ancient Mariner, and our Lobby Correspondent all rolled into one. He froze the blood and he never lacked an audience. Almost every day he had something fresh. How a more than usually lively session of 2c with Mr Parmiter had been interrupted, Mr Parmiter himself dismissed brusquely to the Common Room, and 2c, under Crick's own relentless, beady eyes, subjected to an hour's continuous intensive P.T., which had, so Philbrick assured us, reduced the collective weight of 2c by fourteen and a half stones; how Addenbrooke, a boy in *Transitus* who had always had difficulty in getting up of a morning, had been required to send to Crick, for the space of one week, a daily telegram, this telegram to be paid for out of Addenbrooke's personal financial reserves, to be dictated from a public call-box, to carry in the space marked 'Time handed in' the information '7.0 a.m.', and to convey in each case the identical message 'I am up—Addenbrooke'; how Challinor of Remove B had been given six for stuffing the keyhole of Mr Parmiter's form-room door with damp blotting-paper (Challinor, when challenged by Crick, so Philbrick reported, had been thunderstruck, since he had operated thus on Mr Parmiter's door scores of times before with no after-effects whatsoever, save, of course, for a little innocent fun), and how, between each of the six strokes, Crick had paused at his desk to dash off a postcard;

how Peachman, for playing shove-ha'penny on the large mahogany table in the library, had been made to touch his toes in a corner, and how Crick had then taken a run at him; how Merriman-Toms, whose father was Alderman Merriman-Toms and a trenchant speaker at council debates, had returned to school one morning black and blue from an earlier encounter with Crick and armed with a letter from his father, and how, in the act of knocking at Crick's study-door to deliver this note, he had fallen down in a dead faint and had lain there till discovered by the Sergeant-Major, who had carried him gallantly—Merriman-Toms had something of Philbrick's build—to the gym for sal volatile and wet towels; how Bruiser Clarke—but the stories were endless. We listened, apprehensive yet fascinated.

The queer thing was that we, Form Three, seemed immune. Every day the bell tolled for someone, but it never seemed to toll for us. We walked unscathed so far through the blitz, a word which in those days had no English sense for us—and for most of us no German sense either; the incidents always seemed to happen in the next road but one. There was nobody in our own circle who qualified as yet for the rôle of Horse's Mouth. So for this reason, as well as for the detailed excellence of the reports themselves, Philbrick's intelligence service was booming. No one else had his contacts. No one else had his flair.

But, *ex hypothesi*, no one else could very well keep a check on him. The Peachmans, the Challinors, the Addenbrookes—all of them, in fact, except 2c, whose mass liquefaction by P.T. we had certainly all been able to verify—were above us in the school, out of our star, moving in statelier, more exalted orbits. Could Philbrick be relied upon? I was a devoted admirer of Philbrick, and in public was always careful that no crack in the cement of our alliance should ever become apparent. In private, however, this question—Could Philbrick be relied upon?—had been sounding more and more insistently in my head as that term wore on and Philbrick's stories grew more and more scarifying.

And this last story of Pullen, the prefect, the first fifteen hooker and his unheard-of humiliation—it really could not be swallowed without some preliminary prods to make sure the *bonne bouche* was genuinely assimilable and not just Philbrick's paste and make-believe. How, after all, could Philbrick be so familiar

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with the movements of an Olympian like Pullen? 'In the bar at the Grand last Saturday night,' I defined my question stubbornly. Philbrick was still sulking.

'No. I wasn't there,' Philbrick at last brought himself to admit. 'It's true though. Cross my heart and I hope I'm struck dead if it's not. Go and ask Pullen yourself, if you like. You surely don't think a chap like Crick'd think twice about beating a pre, do you?'

No, I didn't think that. Philbrick was perfectly right, of course. Crick I felt to be a man not merely capable of enormities but rejoicing in them. 'No,' I said. 'No. He'd do it all right. Only—' I paused. I was wondering how to put it tactfully.

'Only what?'

'Well—it's always hearsay. Nothing ever seems to happen to chaps we know. You're always saying how someone or other's been put through it, but it's never anyone we can tackle for ourselves. I agree Crick's a horror all right. I get the shivers just seeing him go by. All the same—I plucked up courage—you've got to admit it's queer.'

I knew immediately I had gone too far. Philbrick swelled, and his eyes began to pop. 'So I'm a liar, am I?'

I was too young to know how to deal with the dramatic attitudinising of the artistic temperament—there was much of the artist in Philbrick, the artist's inquisitiveness first of all, and the artist's greed for experience whether at first or second-hand. But then, at that tense moment, all I could see was a fat lump who refused to recognise the reasonableness of what I had been saying. He wanted a row, so he should have one. 'Yes, of course you are. A fat chance Pullen'd talk to you! Put his foot down and squash you, more likely!'

Philbrick took a moment or two to recover from my assault. Only once or twice did our long and close relationship come as near to rupture as this. I can only suppose Philbrick was as disinclined as I normally was to see our friendship put abruptly on the shelf. At all events he chose a line—grieved dignity—that my sudden and quite unpremeditated aggressiveness found great difficulty in making headway against. 'You're usually pretty keen to listen to what I find out about Crick, anyway. Pretty soon now he'll be dropping on us. Then you'll see. In a way,' he added magnificently, 'I hope he does drop on us.'

The following Monday—a black Monday

if ever there was one—Philbrick's hope was fulfilled.

WE assembled every morning for prayers in Big School. This was a long, rather narrow, hall. One of the long walls was pierced by an arch which led into a small room called The Recess. Crick, like his lamented predecessor, stood on a platform with his back to this Recess in order to take prayers. This arrangement meant that the school faced him thinly on a very wide front. Our Form, the Third, did very well out of this because Mr McWhirter, who did the placing in Big School every September, had fitted us into the top corner in three rows of nine starting from the back wall. Philbrick stood nice and tight in the corner on the back row and I paraded beside him. From nine to nine-fifteen every morning we considered ourselves out of range. 'Unless he twists and squints, we're all right,' Philbrick said. 'And we're sure to notice if he does that. You can alter my French a bit, and I can give your maths the once-over.' We put this system into practice forthwith, and our marks showed the benefit immediately. My algebra was a poor, tottery thing on its own; it brisked up considerably with Philbrick there to give it an arm. And Philbrick's French was Stratford-atte-Bowe at a venture; I was able to tidy that up—discreetly, of course, so as not to invite awkward questions.

That Monday morning we were both of us busy during prayers because the week-end homework had been heavy. Busy—and also, burying our ostrich-heads into our secluded angle, careless. I remember tittering a little over Philbrick's translation of 'You were silent' in his French exercise, and audibly assuring him, vastly amused and incredulous though he was, that what he ought to have written was '*Vous vous tûtes*.' 'Voo voo toot,' he repeated delightedly and even more audibly. 'Gosh, what a lingo, eh?'

After prayers Crick used to give out notices; sometimes, too, he used to discuss with us, frankly and icily, our lack of manners and our lazy ways. That morning there were no notices, nor had he anything to discuss. All he said was, in the most casual tone imaginable: 'Form Three will stay behind after the rest of the school has been dismissed.'

In a moment I was in a pitiable state. This was it. My legs felt weak, and inside it was as though all the fluids and substances were



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draining out of me. I looked at Philbrick. His face expressed a queer, competing mixture of triumph and consternation. Harker, who was on my right, jabbed me sharply in the ribs. 'It's you two've landed us in this,' he said. 'Tooting and fluting. That great fat oaf thinks he's invisible.' He spoke bitterly. Harker was a boy whose homework stood in daily need of brightening up; but a quarter of an hour was not a long time, too short certainly for any elaborate system of interchange. Besides, academically, Harker was a near-bankrupt, with no assets to pump into a combine. We had excluded him. He had been an unwilling looker-on, who had seen all of the game, and was now going to be called upon to pay an undue share in the expenses. Looking back, I can sympathise with the breathtaking venom of the jab he gave me. At the time, however, with Crick threading his way towards us across an empty bench-strewn hall, it seemed heartless and cruel past bearing.

Crick squatted on a form in front of us. He looked enormous, a crouching Buddha with a bland and sleepy smile. His sponge-bag trousers were tight over his thighs. He clasped his hands round one knee. I can still see the signet-ring on his little finger, the black hairs crisping roguishly round the dull gold. He looked at us steadily and said not a word. What was he waiting for? Not silence, certainly. I could hear the boy at the end of my row breathing, rather quickly, in and out. Crick was a man who understood the value of suspense. At last he spoke. 'This is a slack school. It's going to be braced up. At prayers you stand up firm and straight. When a hymn is to be sung you sing it. And when no active part is required of you, you stand in silence. These are very simple rules and ought to be very well known to everybody.' Crick paused. All this he had said quietly, silkily, yet no man, by a casual, unconcerned manner of address, ever conveyed more forcefully the impression of banked fires, of a scalding, violent head of steam which at any terrifying moment might blow its top off. He went on, more gratingly now: 'Well known to everybody except this Form. This Form is a miserable collection of slouchers and shufflers and talkers. From this moment on this Form will change. And change for good. I am going to assume this time that your shocking manners are due to ignorance, and so I shall dismiss you with a general warning. But I only warn once.'

I saw Harker licking his lips. My inner fluids

and substances began to surge back to their proper positions. It was going to be all right. I sensed along all the three rigid rows of us a tiny slackening of tension. But wait a minute. Crick had something more to say. 'There are two boys here whose behaviour this morning has been so deplorable that ignorance cannot be taken as an excuse. These two'—Crick brought this bit out with blunt and awful zest—'I shall beat immediately. Perhaps that will help to make the rest of you realise that this is a serious business.' He paused, unclasped his hands, leaned forward, and raised a finger. I felt hot, and then I felt cold. Again I could hear the quick in-and-out breathing from the end of my row. 'You, and you,' a voice was saying from far away, 'go down to my study and wait for me there.' The finger pointed first at me and then at Philbrick.

I SIDLED out. The Third Form watched. Harker, screened momentarily from Crick's gaze as I passed him, gave me a heartless push. The words of the hymn I had so tragically neglected to sing that morning came into my mind:

*He who would valiant be  
'Gainst all disaster.*

I started gabbling to myself: 'I will be valiant, I will be valiant,' yet at the same time I was deeply distrustful of my power to see the next ten minutes through. I was filled with an unreasoning incredulosity. This was happening to me. This was me, squeezing along between the rows and out to execution. It couldn't be. Something would happen to stop it. The Form, moved by the injustice, no, the sheer awfulness of it, would speak up for me in a body. I glanced, filled with foolish expectancy, at half-a-dozen faces. I saw interest certainly; I saw relief too, and the callous, appreciative stare that the bullfighter must often see on the faces of those on the right side of the fence. But of fellow-feeling, of solidarity, of any disposition to bring five and twenty bright swords flashing from their scabbards I saw not a trace. I can recall still the desolation of that moment. I must have paused, or lingered, at the end of the row, still hoping vaguely for something, and then I heard Philbrick muttering behind me out of almost closed lips: 'Go on. Move, you ass.'

I had forgotten Philbrick. Crick's finger had pointed first at me. The first 'you' had



## AN INSIDE STORY

been for me. I had had at the time no clear awareness of anything else he had said after that. Philbrick's muttering behind me, the realisation that he too was on his way to the stake—Mr Parmiter's boomings about Bloody Mary, despite all the attendant distractions, were running much in my thoughts at the beginning of that term—gave me a little fresh strength. I ought, I suppose, to have felt sorry for Philbrick, to have wished him safe back in the remote, well-screened corner out of which Crick, with his all-seeing angler's eye, had hooked him. But I was too shaken to be able to rise to heroism, even theoretical, would-be heroism, I was just glad to hear him behind me. We marched down the long hall together.

Outside the study door we stopped. The little gush of confidence that had carried me so far faltered and dried. Down here, at the end of this carpeted corridor, it was dark and silent. A side-table, with a silver salver on it, glowed coldly at us. There were no ink-stains anywhere, no carved names. Everything was dusted and wax-polished. We stood in a frozen, unfamiliar world. I looked at Philbrick. His large face was paler than usual, but for all that he seemed to me to be splendidly calm. 'If he has us one at a time,' he whispered—and even whispering sounded clamorous in that place—'I'll stand nearest the door and go first.'

'Yes,' I breathed gratefully. 'Yes. All right then.' Having to wait would be awful, but anything that postponed, even for a few minutes, my march across that threshold was welcome. There might be an earthquake, or a fire, or I might faint. I felt faint—or queer, anyway—as it was. Perhaps if I held my breath, or rammed the slip-knot of my tie hard into my gullet. . . .

**I** HEARD Crick approaching. He wore iron tips on his boot-heels, so that in corridors and over tiles he could be heard at a considerable distance. It was the only decent habit we had discovered in him so far. He passed us with his head in the air. We might not have been there. His brisk, clanking tread had gone suddenly silent and sinister, as he reached the carpeted area. With the door half-open he paused and nodded at Philbrick. 'You first,' he said.

I have never in all my life listened with the passionate concentration I achieved during

the next few minutes. I found myself sweating with the effort of it. But the door was thick. All that came through was the faint murmur of voices. No shrieks, no berserk roaring, no stockwhip cracks—the pair of them might have been going amicably over last Saturday's first fifteen match, point by point. I was so surprised that I forgot for a moment my fear and pressed my ear against the door.

There was a rattle of the knob. The door swung open. I almost fell over sideways into the study. I would have fallen, I think, had not Crick pushed me hard in the opposite direction. Out in the corridor again I came to rest. The door clicked to. Crick was standing over me. 'Look at me, boy,' he said. 'Don't stand there dithering.'

I looked at him. It cost me a lot, but I looked at him. His face was high up, far away above me. 'Philbrick takes responsibility for this morning's beastly bad manners,' he said. 'You were apparently the foolish hanger-on, unable to resist getting mixed up in it.' He paused. 'Is that right?'

Well, there it was. The crucial moment. The moment of choice. I could be heroic, and truthful—because though Philbrick was the initiator I was as much to blame as he—and march forward, chin up, to the slaughter. Or I could take refuge behind Philbrick's astounding staunchness, murmur an inglorious 'Yes, sir,' and that, presumably, would be the end of it.

This ought to be my opportunity for describing the final triumph of courage and honour and truth—of the manly virtues, in short. But the fact is that when Crick put his question to me, I did not at that moment become aware of any moral dilemma at all. A warm gush of relief spread through me and swamped all other considerations before they had time to become articulate. 'Yes, sir,' I said. 'Oh, thank you, sir,' I grovelled. And then I burst into tears.

'Go back to your class,' Crick said, taking no notice of this deplorable breakdown. He turned and went into the study again. The door clicked to as I crept piteously up the carpeted passage, and it was only when I heard that click that the enormity of what I had done burst upon me. I had left Philbrick to face the ogre alone.

**I** CROSSED the quadrangle and sat down on a low wall which ran behind the bicycle-

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sheds and which was not under observation from any classroom windows. I needed a moment to recover myself before going on to cope with Wart and Book X of the *Aeneid*.

In a very short while I heard the gravel crunching, and saw Philbrick making his way slowly to Mr McWhirter's form-room. He was pensive, but bore no visible signs of having recently passed through the fire. I produced a discreet version of my imitation of a starling in full chatter. Philbrick paused and then came towards me. He knew I must be somewhere about, because when it came to starlings I had no successful imitators. 'He let me off,' Philbrick said.

He was strangely glum about it, I thought. And self-engrossed, too. It did not seem to have occurred to him that I was his debtor and that I had behaved like a poltroon. I hastened to do nothing to put the idea into his head. 'Our lucky day,' I said, with hollow and awful cheerfulness.

Philbrick was still aggrieved and far away. 'He popped out, came back, said that was all right, ran his hand through my hair and spoiled my parting, jawed a bit, and then told me to clear out.' He paused, and glared at me. 'So now I s'pose you'll still go on thinking I'm a liar?'

For a moment I was at a loss. Then I remembered our little set-to of the previous week. So that was what was worrying him. 'I hope he does drop on us'—wasn't that what Philbrick had said? But I still could not make much sense of his present mood.

'I wanted Crick all to myself,' he was saying. 'Just to see. I wanted to find out on my own just what it was like. And then you could sniff and snuff till you were blue in the face and it wouldn't matter a hoot, because I'd have the inside story, and sucks to you. I'd know.' He turned away. 'I'm off,' he said, with a marked lack of fellowship. 'It's nearly the end of the period.'

I lingered a moment, and mused. My musings were vague and inarticulate. Had I been able to frame them in words I think I should have been thinking how complicated life was. And how terrifying. And how subtle.

The bell started to clang to mark the end of the period. I rose from my low wall and started off to rejoin the Third Form. Mr McWhirter had already left them; I could see him in the distance twinkling along towards the Common Room on his shiny black little feet. No dangers lay immediately ahead of me.

Philbrick had a crowd round him when I reached the door. His face was red and animated. His eyes wore their finest lustre. 'Yes, honestly,' he was saying, 'honestly, he takes a run at you, the whole length of the study. You can hear him charging up—whump, whump, whump . . .' Harker whistled reverently. I took a deep breath, quickly rearranged my ideas, and went on in.

This time, anyway, I was not going to let Philbrick down.

December First Story : *Truculento* by A. S. M. Hutchinson.

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### Chance Encounter

*Standing we talk, not knowing what strange fuel  
Has burned to-day behind the eyes that look  
Here, there, or at each other.*

*November's draggled splendour covers the woods,  
And rain and flying wind shower down the leaves  
This wild and sombre weather.*

*What spring, what cloudy autumn of the mind,  
What joy or lack of it hide in us, now  
Talking small things together?*

F. J. CATLEY,

# The Highlanders of Waipu

A. J. de B. FORBES

ONE hundred years ago a body of Highlanders arrived in Waipu, New Zealand. There they settled, and there their descendants remain to this day. To them, it was the hoped-for ending of a journey that had taken them three-quarters of the way round the world and over thirty years to accomplish; to us, looking back from the vantage-point of a century in time, the story of their wanderings resembles nothing so much as the wanderings of the Israelites in the Wilderness. In these days when the movement of people from these islands to the British dominions beyond the seas is once more a subject of eager discussion and action, when a guaranteed job, house, and free passage are almost essential to tempt the adventurous, the tale of their fellow-emigrants of one hundred years ago is not without interest, and, perhaps, a moral.

The Moses of our story was a native of Assynt, in Sutherland, Norman McLeod. In those days the neighbourhood of Assynt was McLeod country; it was a McLeod of Assynt who betrayed Montrose in 1650 and a McLeod who guided Prince Charlie in his wanderings in the Hebrides. Norman was born on the 17th of September 1780. Like many Scottish boys of poor parents, his ambition was to become a minister. He worked his way through Aberdeen University, graduating in Arts. He then went to Edinburgh to study theology. In his third and final year he took it upon himself to rebuke publicly one of the Professors of Divinity for what he considered to be his loose mode of life. For this he was not unnaturally rusticated and became what the Scots call a 'stickit minister.' Norman returned to Assynt a disappointed man. He became a parish schoolmaster, but in each appointment the same trouble dogged his footsteps. He could not resist the temptation to preach, and in the process to denounce the mode of life and teachings of the ministers of

the Church of Scotland. Norman must have been an eloquent and persuasive preacher, for wherever he went he emptied the parish church. This hardly endeared him to the parish ministers, and before long the post of schoolmaster was barred to him. There being no money in lay preaching, he became the skipper of a herring-boat based on Wick and Caithness, where he quickly established himself as preacher to several hundred of his countrymen following the same occupation.

Norman was successful enough as a fisherman to contemplate returning to his native Assynt and spending his life crofting and fishing. But he had not bargained with the flood of evictions and clearances that swept so many Highlanders from their crofts about this time to make way for sheep. Norman, in common with many of his countrymen, decided to take ship for America. He joined the *Frances Ann* of 400 tons sailing from Loch Broom and bound for Pictou on the northern coast of Nova Scotia. Four hundred people embarked aboard the *Frances Ann*—old, young, and babes in arms. To the shores of lovely Loch Broom they came, from Loch Maree and Gairloch, from Garve and Pitlochry, from Assynt and Lochinver. It was a piteous scene as they bade farewell to their beloved Highlands. The Rev. Lachlan McKenzie from Loch Broom parish conducted a farewell service, and as the ship weighed anchor Norman McLeod led them in singing McCrimmon's lament:

*Return, return, return we never;  
In peace nor war return we never;  
With silver or gold return we never;  
Eternal adieu, return we never.*

And, indeed, most of them never did.

NORMAN automatically became the exiles' acknowledged leader. Not only did he

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conduct prayers daily, but when the ship developed a leak in mid-Atlantic he managed to persuade the captain that his estimate of their position was wrong and that they were nearer the American continent than the nearest port in Ireland. The pumps were manned and the *Frances Ann* arrived safely at Pictou. Before them was a coastline presenting an unbroken front of trees, and untouched by the hand of man. Winter was close by in a climate severer than that of their native Scotland. They had only the simplest of tools, no money, no domestic animals, and no shelter of any kind. The outlook was bleak. Norman, however, led them in a co-operative effort to the completion of the most urgent tasks—shelter before winter was too far advanced, and the reclamation from the forest, and sowing, of sufficient cultivatable land to meet their essential needs. In this they largely succeeded, but not without great suffering and hardship. Dispirited by homesickness and unable to stand the cold, hunger, and hardship, some of the older ones died. The rest, under Norman's leadership, gradually made headway on their holdings. Norman spent all his time acting as minister, teaching, keeping law and order, and generally guiding the group; in return, others saw to the running of his farm. Meanwhile a group of Highlanders at Ohio seeking a Gaelic-speaking minister and hearing of Norman's ability as a preacher attempted to persuade him to join them. He refused to leave his flock, whereupon the Highlanders of Ohio offered to find land for the whole party. Norman without overmuch difficulty managed to persuade his fellow-emigrants that a move to Ohio was to their best advantage. But a ship was necessary. Where was it to come from? They had no money to buy it. There was only one answer—to make one. This they proceeded to do. They began to build her in the summer of 1819, and in the spring of 1820 a vessel of 200 tons, called the *Ark*, was launched. They sailed on 1st May 1820 with few regrets.

All went well until they had passed through the Strait of Canso, but then, moving out into the Atlantic, they encountered a terrific gale from the south-west. They were driven along the south coast of Cape Breton Island, when suddenly the wind changed and blew a gale from the north-east. This reversed their course and carried them to Bird Island. Now in grave danger of being wrecked on the east coast of Cape Breton Island they took shelter

under Cape Dauphin, and thence into St Ann's Bay, where they dropped anchor in comparatively smooth water. For several days they had been battened under hatches and for the second time since leaving Loch Broom had been in imminent danger of shipwreck. Was it that they did not wish to tempt Providence too far that decided them to stay at St Ann's, within the Bay, and abandon the journey to Ohio? All we know is that they disembarked on 20th May 1820. The *Ark* set off to return to Pictou as previously arranged, but was never heard of again.

St Ann's was Pictou over again, with no sign of human habitation and hilly, timbered country. We wonder what the settlers must have felt as they faced the task of clearing the forest once more, of another winter inadequately clothed and housed, of a prospect so like Pictou and so unlike the mild and pleasant Ohio they had so confidently expected. It was Norman McLeod who gave them heart. Things were not quite so bad this time, he told them. They were better equipped and knew more of the techniques of clearing, building, and cultivating suitable to that type of country. With his encouragement, it was not long before they had built themselves the essentials of life and begun progressively to make improvements.

They remained twenty-one years at St Ann's. Slowly they became more prosperous and extended the area of their activities. They even built small boats and traded up and down the coast, though never on a very large scale. It was not much of a life, but it was infinitely better than life in the Highlands and they persuaded many hundreds of their friends to join them. Throughout it all they knew no civil authority. Norman from his pulpit established a patriarchal authority, evidently adequate to keep order, and, indeed, to create a sense of community of quite extraordinary strength and quality.

IT was from this steadily improving existence that they were roused in 1847 by a letter from Norman McLeod's son, posted from Adelaide, South Australia. Donald McLeod, a sea-captain, strongly advised his father and people to leave the cold, bleak shores of St Ann's and come to Australia. We can only guess at the arguments Norman used to persuade his flock, now grown to a thousand in number, that their future lay on the other side



## THE HIGHLANDERS OF WAIPU

of the world. We can guess that the long, cold winters had something to do with it, and we know that there was a potato blight in that year. No doubt Norman told them that the Lord beckoned him, and of course this would carry considerable weight with a God-fearing people. Nevertheless, that Norman did persuade them is a remarkable testimony to the respect in which he was held.

Once again the emigrants set themselves to shipbuilding and by October 1851 two ships, the *Margaret* and the *Highland Lass*, were ready for the journey. On the day chosen for sailing *Highland Lass*, which had been moored close to the shore, was found to be icebound, and it was decided that the *Margaret* should sail alone. On 31st October Norman McLeod, now in his seventy-first year, with his wife, three daughters, and three sons, and 136 of his people, set sail. For once the seas were at their best. The company organised games and music to relieve the monotony, and the tropical seas echoed to the unaccustomed skirl of the bagpipes. They called at Santiago in the Cape Verde Islands, and also at Cape Town to secure fresh water, fruit, and vegetables, and, we can be sure, to post letters to their friends in St Ann's.

They arrived off Adelaide on 10th April 1852 after a voyage of 164 days, covering 12,000 miles. To their dismay, Donald McLeod, whom they had confidently expected to be waiting for them, was nowhere to be seen. They found a letter announcing his departure for Melbourne, but no arrangements had been made. Though bitterly disappointed, Norman, despite his age, set out at the head of a small exploring party. Adelaide they discovered to be nothing but a straggling village and all the land in its vicinity already taken up for sheep-runs. There was plenty to be had away behind Mount Lofty and up Spencer Gulf, as they found when they pushed out in that direction, but it was parched and barren, with a hot and sultry climate and an entire absence of rivers, streams, or wells. To an agricultural people, reared in a temperate climate close to the sea, the region could not have been more unsuitable. Regretfully they decided against South Australia and set sail for Melbourne.

In 1851, Melbourne, a small and rather sleepy town of 15,000 people, had been suddenly awakened by the discovery of gold at Ballarat. The gold-fever was at its height when our Highlanders arrived. They found

ships in the harbour idle for the want of the crews deserted to the diggings; businesses and hotels closed for the same reason; food prices fantastically high; excitement at fever-pitch. Little wonder that the *Margaret's* passengers were bewildered and bemused. There was no sign once again of Captain Donald McLeod, nor of anyone else to whom they could turn. Their liquid funds were practically exhausted and their straits seemed desperate. Once again Providence intervened in the form of a merchant of Scottish origin, who, hearing of their plight, bought their ship, told them of a suitable place to camp on the banks of the Yarra Yarra, and recommended various places where they might settle.

Norman, determined to keep his company together, urged them to find suitable employment in Melbourne. Many of them had no difficulty in doing this, while others took off for the gold-diggings. Norman himself led an exploring party to spy out suitable places for settlement. But everywhere the emigrants went it was the Adelaide story over again—plenty of land, but heavy forest, with dry parched plains, no water, roads, or food. They ended their searches, not unsuitably, at Mount Disappointment. On the night after returning to Melbourne and reporting his findings to his people, who by this time included the travellers from St Ann's in *Highland Lass*, Norman, it is said, gathered his flock around him and told them the Biblical story of the Israelites. Then together they sang the 137th Psalm:

*By Babel's stream we sat and wept,  
when Sion we thought on.  
In midst thereof we hang'd our harps  
the willow-trees upon.*

MEANWHILE the settlers had been gathering information from traders and whalers of the excellent prospects in New Zealand. As these reports increased in volume Norman managed to persuade two of his most trusted lieutenants to take the next ship bound for Russell, in the Bay of Islands, then capital of New Zealand. John McKay and John Fraser left on the 50-ton *Gazelle* and arrived to find the capital had removed to Auckland. They were more than pleased with what they saw of the country in the vicinity of Auckland and approached the Governor, Sir George Grey, about a grant of land. Grey, who had been having a lot of

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trouble with the Maoris, bethought himself of the Waipu block of land about 100 miles north of Auckland—there was nothing like close settlement to keep the troublesome Maori in check. He offered the newcomers blocks at five to ten shillings an acre, with no limit on the amount that could be acquired. This they considered satisfactory, and McKay returned to Melbourne, while Fraser stayed to make inquiries as to the best spot to settle.

Once again the extraordinary attachment of these wanderers to Norman was demonstrated. He managed to persuade them almost without exception to accompany him to New Zealand. Despite the lure of gold, they followed him to an unknown and possibly dangerous life still further across the sea. Such of the heads of families as had travelled to the goldfields returned to Melbourne, ready to accompany the expedition with their new-won capital. They decided to use the *Highland Lass* and, after refitting, they departed early in December 1852 on the last stage of their long journey with close on 300 aboard. They anchored under the shelter of Rangitoto Island in Auckland harbour early in January 1853.

An exploring party, again led by Norman, travelled in a whaleboat up the coast and landed at the mouth of the Waipu River, having been prevented from travelling overland by the complete absence of roads and the presence of hostile Maoris. The land rose sharply from the coast to the top of a hill. Below them lay the sacred Vale of Ares. On their right they could see the purple form of the Hen and Chickens Isles, and in the distance the bold black headland known as Bream Head. North and south rose range upon range of glorious mountain scenery that immediately appealed to these sons of the mountains. Norman looked about him and

found the prospect good. He christened the hill Mount Pisgah.

Once more our Highlanders faced the task of starting from scratch in a lonely, uninhabited, and undeveloped piece of country. But they were used to it by now and inured to hardship. In any case, it was not quite as hard. The climate was pleasanter; they did not have to worry so much about shelter and warm clothes. And they had a feeling that this was the end of their journey. They were right—their descendants are there to this day. They have inherited fine, prosperous farms varying in size from 100 to 300 acres and a magnificent tradition. The area, if you visit it to-day, retains many of the Highland customs and characteristics of its first settlers. But much as Norman McLeod would have liked it, they could not remain isolated for ever. To be sure, four more boatloads of settlers came out from St Ann's to join them, bringing their numbers to about 1000 in all. But even a group as large and as tightly knit as this had to suffer infiltration and losses, with resulting gradual change of characteristics. In 1853, for instance, practically no one could speak English; a hundred years later practically no one can speak Gaelic.

There can be little in British history to approach the story of this remarkable venture. A simple and rural people voluntarily left their home in search of a land at the other side of the world of which they knew nothing. They built their own ships and equipped them. They found officers and crews amongst themselves. They sailed them successfully while committing their destinies to the God of their fathers. Reared on the Bible, they likened themselves to Israel in Egypt. They had their Moses. They had their vision of their promised land. They found it.

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### Thoughts at Bedtime

*My window-panes are black to-night,  
Though silver raindrops scar the glass  
With sudden strings of liquid light  
That shine and run and pass.*

*And well I know, while now I rake  
The embers, how the woodland thins  
As hosts of air ride down and shake  
Their windy javelins;*

*And from the housetop silently,  
A giant seated at his desk,  
My chimney scrawls upon the sky  
His smoky arabesque.*

*Yet I've a hope as I retire  
To find at dawn those silver-crost  
Black windows bright with woven wire  
And stitchery of frost.*

WILFRID THORLEY.

## Fourth Wall

### *The Listening Panel of the B.B.C.*

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N 287 X, HOUSEWIFE

EVERY week now for five months the head of Audience Research of the B.B.C. has sent me, along with 3599 others, a packet of forms and in it a blue slip thanking me for my continued co-operation on the listening panel. And every week, with possibly 3599 others, I have wanted to reply that the boot was on the other foot and that I was the one to do the thanking. It has given me tremendous satisfaction during these five months and I am loath to say good-bye to the panel. For the B.B.C. it must be a big job sorting out and tabulating all the returns. For listeners, though, it is just a gentle occupation intermixed freely with pleasure. There is no duty listening, remember.

To me the whole affair resembles that of the chocolate-taster. Before the War a friend of mine was a lay taster for a big chocolate-firm and received at intervals an assorted half-pound box complete with adjudication form. Each chocolate was wrapped in a numbered paper and the taster's family and friends were invited to pass verdict on new varieties. I assisted once. New to the game, I popped in a large knob whole and shamelessly chattered as I munched, after which I tossed off a hasty '5/5—Delicious.' My friend, however, was a connoisseur. She sat in a place apart, head in hands, and savoured hers slowly with infinite concentration. It was some moments before she was with us again. Still rolling the flavour round her tongue, she wrote: 'Covering and filling nicely blended. One moment of bliss in the centre. 4/5.' That, I think, illustrates the difference between the casual listener and the panel member, for the member's job, to be of real value, should be carried out conscientiously, with thoroughness and enthusiasm.

This listening panel seems to me to be to

radio what the theatre audience is to the stage—the fourth wall. Without an audience and the approval of that audience the actors are redundant. The panel, drawn as they are from a cross-section of the community, represent the listening public and act as spokesmen; they can either accept or reject what they hear. Insignificant as these weekly forms may appear, they are a direct contact with headquarters, and when the findings have been collected and used the circle is complete. Although this form-filling is trivial enough in itself, we are given to understand that the joint contributions are of high value to the department.

SITTING pen in hand and giving the matter your full attention makes listening a much more significant thing, almost as though you were wearing spectacles for the first time and seeing everything sharply and in focus. Critical listening gives greater point to a radio-set, adding exercise of judgment to mere information and entertainment. Only those who are happy listening quietly have any wish to be panel members; those who use their radio as a background for work and talk are probably not interested. In my case panel listening has been an extension of my normal listening, requiring that extra bit of concentration and reporting which is really no labour at all. On the contrary, I listen as a welcome relaxation, much as a business man will sit down to a keen game of bridge at the end of a gruelling day or a doctor lie back to unravel the mysteries of a thriller. For a woman, provided home conditions are favourable, it can be as refreshing as attending an evening's hobbies class or escaping into the fantasy of the film world.

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The scope panel listening offers is endless. Obviously there is abundant opportunity for narks; but equally there is ample room for praise. Among other things, you are asked your opinion on personality traits—the phrase is mine—of the broadcaster under review, whether singer, actor, speaker, or something else—a wide field this in itself; on the production of a programme, its presentation, sound-effects, timing, interim music, and so on—there's food for thought there all right; on the material composing the programme, the theme of the play, selection of music, choice of subject for a talk—no small matter you'll agree. The inarticulate need do no more than ring a letter and cross out what is inapplicable. Those who have something to add are allotted a space for comments—a beggarly half-inch very often. And this is where you can assert yourself, expanding from a type listener to an individual listener, with peculiar likes and dislikes, suggestions and constructive criticisms.

Here, too, you can let yourself go, for you are in the unique position of being able to answer the B.B.C. back! Perhaps for years you have suffered at the mercies of some regular feature and your only defence was to switch off. But now you can take up a positive attitude and denounce the feature with a battery of reasons. Or you can put in a plea for something near to your heart, extol the virtues of some brilliant speaker, or comment on an aspect of broadcasting you have never been able to understand—in my case the fact that all stairs in radio plays are uncarpeted and a character leaves a luxury apartment to go clattering with abandon down a flight of bare boards. Having expressed your sentiments, you begin to feel better—and garret life goes on.

**C**ONTINUED, close listening has made me, for one, long increasingly to know more about the inner workings of broadcasting. Attendances at public broadcasts and lectures by B.B.C. personnel, two auditions, and three slight broadcasts have only stimulated my appetite. I can appreciate to some measure the hush round the microphone as the red minute-hand ticks relentlessly on, the flash of green light, and the long stout pages of script

—but it is not enough. I am only the eager for more.

It is amazing what detail comes through even a twenty-year-old receiver when you deliberately set out to listen—all manner of tiny sounds that would otherwise pass unnoticed, such as the fumbling for words when a page is turned, the solemn tick of the studio clock, a lisp of a child singing in the front row at school. Your imagination becomes more than ordinarily keen. You find it fun to visualise the speaker at the other end, the physique and stature, bearing and manner, facial expression and set of the mouth, for the whole of a personality must come to life through the medium of the voice alone. I often think, in this connection, how dentists steal a march over the rest of us, for they must be able to reconstruct each individual mouth.

There is another aspect to this listening—it brings with it a feeling of goodwill, of being of use to the community, of turning one's personal pleasures to account—in short, of being wanted. The invalid who is out of touch with the active world can still pull his weight with the best when it comes to being a panel member, and the mother whose children no longer need her, the pensioner, and the blind all feel a sense of adequacy, which psychologists tell us is an essential to well-being. I know how disappointed I was to be turned down by the Common Cold Research Unit at Salisbury on the grounds of being too old at forty, and how I was rejuvenated on being accepted for listening.

Here then is my tribute—thank you, Audience Research, for allowing me to participate and for accepting my small services with such gratitude. But we are the privileged ones. Perhaps we get our way more often than is good for us in the home when there is a particular programme on tap. Our listening, too, becomes woven into the texture of our lives, giving colour to what we are doing and clothing it emotionally. It helps along many a drab task about the house—the silver-cleaning, the ironing, the wool-winding, the mending. I remember once listening to World Theatre as I sat sewing. It was an absorbing play and I was completely carried away from reality. When it was over, I discovered that my old kitchen tea-towel was the younger by some thirty neat darns. So you see!





# The Glorious Metropolis

MARY GOUGH

ALMOST without breathing we watched the great stone being unearthed. Ibrahim was digging steadily under the hot sun of southern Turkey, bringing up spadeful after spadeful of rich chocolate soil. Three crops a year it produces, this wonderful Cilician soil, but this time it was giving up something different. Slowly, inch by inch, a Roman milestone, which had probably lain buried for over a thousand years, was being revealed.

Ali danced with impatience on the edge of the hole. 'I told you that you would find written stones here,' he said. 'Dig faster, Ibrahim.'

We sent him off to get water—some for Ibrahim, some to wash the milestone, and some for our own parched, excited throats.

Ali had been particularly tiresome that day. To begin with, he and his wife—most unsuitably named Paradise—had forgotten to bring the milk, and, when eventually they did bring it, Ali settled down to such a long and rambling conversation that we were forced to invite him to come with us on our expedition. Paradise, mercifully, had little Ahmet to tend.

THIS milestone had not been found in our village. We had come eastwards through

a cleft in the crag that overhangs the ruined Roman city at Anavarza; we had crossed the river, and padded several miles through the white June dust to the cluster of cottages, mulberry-trees, and orchards that was the village of Lower Tozlu. Ali, a small, jaunty figure in a cloth cap and a pink shirt, had strolled ahead of us carrying a walking-stick and our field-glasses.

'I'm their interpreter,' I heard him whisper confidentially to the headman who greeted us when we arrived. 'Impresario' would have been nearer the mark. He then launched into a long description of us and our doings—how we had come from England, bringing with us fabulous sums of money; how we had camped for weeks at Anavarza making pictures and photographs of the ruins; how we were slightly off our heads; and how, although we said we were only interested in old stones and buildings, everyone knew we were really looking for treasure—hence our preoccupation with stones that had writing on them. Maddened, we interrupted here. Once the treasure idea got around, we should find no inscriptions at Lower Tozlu. On the contrary, we said, there was no question of treasure-hunting. Who but a fool would bury gold, and then stick up a notice to say he had done so?

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Ali nodded wisely. 'Oh, what a fool he would be!' he echoed, at the same time giving a remarkably sly glance at the headman. We were not so mad as we looked, that glance was intended to imply.

Our sales-talk continued in its usual way. It was easy to see that Anavarza had been an important place in the past, we said. Even though there was only Ali's tiny village there nowadays, the area of the ruins, the beautiful cut stones, with their carvings of flowers and leaves, showed how large and rich it must have been.

John drew a bow at a venture. 'It may even have been as big and important as Tarsus,' he said. The extent of the ruins made it not impossible, and little enough was known of Anavarza's history. 'If we find more written stones, perhaps they will tell us,' he added.

'As big as Tarsus?' This was an entirely new idea. Ali's expressive little face showed real interest, and he stopped teasing us. He knew Tarsus, that thriving, modern, agricultural town, and had been there himself. It was only about sixty miles away.

The other villagers, too, came to life as they grasped this new thought. Their former polite curiosity changed to interest and friendliness.

'Who knows?' I went on. 'Just look at the size of the place, the walls, the churches, the baths, the aqueducts—'

Ali intervened. The limelight must be for him alone. 'I myself,' he said, 'showed the aqueducts to the English, and I said at the time that only a very big city could have needed so much water.'

AFTER this, Lower Tozlu produced a nice little crop of inscriptions, though none of them was particularly important. First one villager, then another would tell us of a stone he had turned up with his plough, and we would follow them to their houses and find the inscription set up as an ornament in a mulberry-shaded courtyard. They were grave-stones for the most part. The daughter of a long-dead Demetrius remembered her father, or some forgotten Gaius wished good luck to the passer-by, or, perhaps most touching of all in their futility, once dignified, substantial citizens threatened with fines 'to be paid to the Treasury' anyone who should disturb their long-since violated tombs. We made copies of them all, while the kind, talkative women-

folk gave us buttermilk to drink and deplored my bare, sunburned arms.

After a time Ibrahim arrived. 'There is a large stone in my field,' he said.

We followed him, and he showed us a column half-buried in the ground. Just above grass-level was the beginning of an inscription. 'It looks like a milestone,' said John, who was on his hands and knees in front of it.

Ibrahim started to dig. By the time that Ali had returned with the water the hole was quite deep and John was down in it spelling out the inscription:

*'To the Emperor, Cæsar Augustus Marcus Aurelius Severus Alexander, Pius, Felix—'*

'What does it say?' Ali almost screamed.

'Wait, Ali,' I said, 'it's the name of the Sultan of those times.'

*'Two miles from Anazarbus, the First, Greatest, and Most Beautiful; the Glorious Metropolis of the Three Provinces.'* John splashed some water on the stone to make the letters stand out more clearly. *'Adorned with Roman Trophies, honoured with the Greatest and Choicest Privileges.'* The golden titles rolled out on the hot summer air.

After we had translated and explained the inscription to Ali, there was no holding him. There in very truth was the proof, written on the stone, that Anavarza, his Anavarza, had once been as important and as grand as Tarsus. We were all very happy on our way home, but Ali was transfigured; he strutted in front of us, bathed in the afterglow of the radiant past. Lower Tozlu was graciously allowed the vicarious glory of being only two miles from the First, Greatest, and Most Beautiful.

IN the days that followed, Ali would spend long hours contemplating the field of ruins that had once been so splendid and populous a city—the triumphal arch with richly-carved cornice and frieze blocks strewn around it; the theatre, now only a rough half-circle hollowed out from the hillside; the city walls, bleached and crumbling under the sun and rainstorms. In particular the forest of broken column-drums that lined the desolate streets or lay forgotten in the undergrowth fascinated him. 'But what are they for?' he would ask. 'Is it because there are no trees here that they had to put these things up for shade?'

One day we received a postcard from my sister-in-law in Paris. It was much thumbbed, but the façade of the Opera with its classical

## THE OLDEST CARS IN THE WORLD

columns could plainly be seen. We showed it to Ali and explained that it was a picture of the capital of France.

With one disparaging glance Ali dismissed

France, Paris, the Opera—everything of today. 'It's a bit like Anavarza,' he said, and turned away to gaze at the Glorious Metropolis around him.

# The Oldest Cars in the World

## *The London to Brighton Commemoration Run*

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SIMON LARKMAN

ON the first day of this month something like a million people will gather along the route from Hyde Park to Brighton to watch an event that has become one of the greatest annual occasions in British motoring. Surprisingly, many of these people would confess to a complete ignorance of motoring matters. But they will stand there for hours just the same, probably in the pouring rain, because this is a motoring event with a difference—all the cars taking part in it are at least forty-nine years old, and some are nearing sixty.

A long time ago a facetious newspaper journalist dubbed this annual London to Brighton run the 'Old Crocks' Race'—and thereby showed his complete ignorance of something that is of real significance in the motoring world. In fact, it is not a race at all, and the cars that take part in it are far from being old crocks. The mechanical condition of most of them would put to shame a good many modern cars not six months off the production-line.

Officially, this stirring annual proof of what our grandfathers' cars can still do is called the Commemoration Run. It is organised jointly by the Royal Automobile Club and the Veteran Car Club of Great Britain and it commemorates a historic run over virtually the same route made by a triumphant band of automobilists fifty-seven years ago. These early motorists were celebrating the repeal of

the chief prohibitory clauses in the Locomotive Acts. Before 1896 a man had to walk ahead of every mechanical vehicle using the public highway.

On that first famous London-Brighton run — 14th November 1896 — forty-one cars gathered at the starting-point in Whitehall early in the morning, and except for two non-starters, set out on the gruelling fifty-five-mile journey. Very few of them indeed survived the course.

Many years ago a daily newspaper thought it would be a good advertising stunt to collect a lot of old cars and repeat the same run. It has been held annually ever since. To-day, nearly all the cars that set off, usually round about a hundred and fifty, finish the journey with flying colours. For one thing, our modern roads are kinder to them. For another, most of them are somewhat later in date than the primitive horseless carriages that made the attempt in 1896—though one or two 1895 jobs still take part regularly, and, in any case, no car built later than 1904 is allowed to enter. Perhaps the most important reason for their reliable performance, however, is that to-day these cars are looked after and driven by men whose patience and mechanical skill are matched only by their enthusiasm.

THE Veteran Car Club was formed in 1930 with the object of preserving historic

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motor-cars built before the end of 1916. The Club's enthusiastic members began collecting these ancient vehicles from all sorts of likely, and unlikely, places. Many of them, in the early 'thirties, were still in daily use as runabouts. Others had been fitted with home-built bodies for work as farm-wagons or milk-floats. Many more were found, tucked away and forgotten, in village garages and farm-yard barns.

These old cars are still coming to light to-day—rusty, battered, often incomplete. But, however hopelessly decayed they may look, there is always some enthusiast ready to buy them and spend endless hours—and almost endless money—painstakingly repairing and rebuilding them to their original condition.

A lot of people think that the cars that splutter and cough along the road to Brighton every November have been restored with modern carburettors, improved ignition, or other up-to-date equipment. They haven't. They are exactly as the manufacturer made them. Sometimes spare parts can be obtained from other Veteran Car Club members, but more often a worn component has to be patiently doctored until it is serviceable again, or replaced with a new part specially made to the maker's original specification. Restoring a newly-found veteran car involves an immense amount of skill and hard work on the part of its owner.

And when he has gone to all that trouble, what has he got? Well, in most cases he has got a piece of engineering craftsmanship that fascinates and delights everyone with a mechanical turn of mind. Grandfather's cars were hand-made, built by men who loved their work. And those men were no fools, either. Amusing as the bodywork may seem to modern eyes, a glance at the works usually wipes the smile off the most supercilious face. Grandpa knew a thing or two. Often enough he was years ahead of his time.

The little Cooper-Alta bomb that Stirling Moss flings round the race-tracks incorporates one of the supposedly latest developments in racing-car technique—De Dion rear-wheel suspension. That same suspension system was a standard fitment on the French De Dion

cars fifty years ago. The steering-column gear-shift lever that we look upon as a hallmark of modernity was used on the 1900 Darracq, another French car. And as far back as 1902 the Humber people produced a car with a steering-column that could be adjusted for both height and rake. Most surprising fact of all is that the first four-wheel petrol-car ever built in Britain had an epicyclic gear-box and pre-selector mechanism. That was the 1895 Lanchester, and those advanced features have been on every Lanchester produced since.

**J**UST how well grandfather's meticulous craftsmanship and ingenuity paid off is illustrated by some of the records of these old cars. There is the story of a 1911 Renault, for example, which was stored away by its owner in 1925 after fourteen years' hard work. Twenty-five years later a veteran-car enthusiast discovered it, filled it up with petrol, and it started at the first pull of the handle. It is still running to-day. So is an 1896 Léon Bollée, which has been in continual use for fifty-seven years, and so is the 1906 3-litre Renault which Queen Alexandra owned. And the son of the man who designed the famous Vauxhall 'Prince Henry' tourer in 1911 still uses one of these regularly as his normal means of transport.

All told, something like six hundred of these time-honoured cars have been discovered and given a fresh lease of life by the Veteran Car Club's thousand-odd members. The cars are worth anything from £200 to perhaps £500 each, and their value tends to increase each year. But no sum of money can really represent the hours of work put in on restoring the vehicles or their value as historic motoring relics.

One day, alas, they will all be gone, for nothing can last for ever. But until that sad day arrives—and on present showings it is still a long way off—the Veteran Car Club's annual rallies and trials will keep truly alive the memory of those early pioneers whose research and ingenuity made the fast smooth cars of to-day a practical possibility.

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**Escapers Repay.**—The Secretary of the R.A.F. Escaping Society asks us on behalf of the Society to thank all who have been moved by A. J. Forrest's article 'Escaper's Repay' in our September issue to send generous donations anonymously or otherwise to the Society. This we are most pleased to do.



## Short-Line Fishing

RONALD K. R. TAYLOR

THE place—the middle of Little Loch Broom, or more correctly, Loch na Bhraoine, the Loch of Winds; the time—two o'clock on a wild dark November morning. It was four hours since we had pushed off from the sheltered little bay, four hours of steady rowing in an unpleasantly-choppy sea, across a biting south-east wind that blew straight down from the snow-filled quarries of An Teallach, lifting the tops off the waves in showers of drenching spindrift. Jim, crouching half-frozen in the bows of the boat peering into the darkness ahead, turned round at last and edged carefully back to the centre thwart, where Stewart and I, sitting side by side, operated the heavy sweeps. 'I think we're just about there,' he shouted above the roaring of the wind. 'We'd better pull out a bit, and wait until the moon comes up.'

We slewed round and lay head on to the wind, waiting for a break in the densely-banked clouds. All round us were the heaving sullen waves, with the dark shapeless masses of the shores far off and remote. I turned over my sweep to the lookout, and crept back to the stern, where John was standing by, ready to throw out the line.

Then, suddenly, the moon appeared, and it was as if a stilling hand had been laid over everything. The fast-moving clouds thinned out and seemed to disintegrate as they crossed the great yellow face, the wind died completely, and the silver waves settled to a long, slow, restless rise and fall. We could see the shores distinctly now, the line of white water falling back from the black rocks below Ben Gobhlach, to the north, and the still-dark south shore sweeping up to the gaunt pinnacles of An Teallach, silhouetted against a quiet sky.

Jim had judged the position well; the four points that marked the position of the feeding-grounds were just where they should have been. As old Duncan had said: 'Take a line

from the fank wall at Badralloch to the end of the nurse's house, and where that crosses the line from the merchant's house to the hotel, put down your first buoy.' It was as if the hotel and the wall and the houses had been deliberately placed as landmarks; even in the darkness we could make them out distinctly—the fank wall one mile to the north, the nurse's house one mile to the south, the hotel two miles eastwards, and the merchant's house four miles to the west.

Jim and Stewart held the position while John paid out the rope and I cleared the flying hooks. As the tide tugged at the rope and pulled it away from us, the line in the basket uncoiled faster and faster, each hook glinting for a short second in the moonlight as it disappeared over the stern.

'Bottom,' said John suddenly, and automatically I shot out my foot to check the line, while he attached his end of the rope to the large floating-buoy. At the same time Stewart dug hard with his sweep, turning the head of the boat round, till we began to drift slowly seawards with the ebbing tide.

So occupied were we with this manoeuvre that we did not notice that the clouds were again piling up behind An Teallach. The first indication we got of approaching trouble was when the moon was suddenly blotted out and the boat began to leap about like a cork. For a few seconds the moon shone through the ragged clouds, and by its fitful light we could see the waves were rising alarmingly. Then the rain came, dense curtains of icy water driven almost horizontally before the wind.

The first squall hit the loch, a twisting screaming vortex of wind almost like a solid black wall that roared across the loch towards us. It was on us before we could turn the boat, literally tearing up the waves and hurling them skywards in enormous waterspouts. We heeled over and spun round, hung for a second

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on a foaming crest, and then plunged down almost vertically into the dark trough. The spent water slapped into the well of the boat and ran hissing round our legs. Blinded with spray and soaked to the skin, John and I lashed the line to the after thwart and staggered forward to help with the sweeps.

The squall passed as quickly as it had come, and in the comparative quiet that followed we were able to swing the boat round and face up to the second one. Once again everything was blotted out in an inky blackness, filled with roaring wind and stinging spray, and when it had cleared again we realised that we had been carried at least a hundred yards nearer to the north shore. We could see the rocks quite distinctly, rising forbiddingly from the loch, with the white waves leaping up on them and falling back in a boiling confusion of broken water.

Between the squalls the wind blew steadily at almost gale-force, and, even with the four of us pulling on the sweeps, we could not gain an inch against it—and with each squall we were swept closer to the sharp rocks of the shore. There was nothing for it but to run before the wind, in the hope of finding shelter in the lee of the headland, hauling in our line after us as we ran.

Just before dawn broke the wind died, and we faced round to make for home—four dog-tired, drenched, half-frozen young men, our lines a hopeless tangle in the bottom of the boat. We had nine weary miles to row—and the only reward for our night's work was one solitary haddock, and the thought that ahead of us lay at least eight hours of hard work unravelling and sorting out our lines.

SUCH was our introduction to short-line fishing. At the time, four of us, John, Jim, Stewart, and myself, were attempting to reclaim some derelict croft-lands in Wester Ross. Things had not gone according to plan; we had underestimated the difficulties of bringing back into cultivation land which had been lying abandoned for years; the projected road- and pier-building operations on which we had hoped to obtain part-time employment had been postponed indefinitely; and the funds of the organisation which was backing us were rapidly drying up. Short-line fishing seemed to be the obvious way to earn sufficient money to enable us to carry on with our work. On our doorstep was a loch once famous for

its catches of line-caught haddock; very little capital outlay was required; and, although the fishing-ports of Ullapool and Gairloch lay only a few miles away, all the catches landed there were immediately whisked off to the big markets of the south, and our glen went fishless from one year's end to the other.

The uninitiated are apt to think of short-line fishing in terms of the hand-lines they used as children to catch cuddies over the end of the pier at holiday resorts. Actually, the 'short-line' is more than a quarter of a mile in length and, with its five hundred barbed hooks, takes quite a lot of handling, particularly in a rough sea. It is called the 'short-line' to distinguish it from the miles-long 'long-lines' used in deep-sea cod-fishing. The line is coiled down in one end of a flat basket and the baited hooks, attached to the main line by short lengths of twine, are spread out flat in layers in the other end, separated by small pieces of newspaper. Thus when the line is being paid out the hooks fall into position without difficulty.

In theory, the team rows to the feeding-grounds just after the turn of the tide and proceeds to set its line along the sea-bed. One end is attached to a piece of stout rope weighted with a heavy stone, and long enough to reach to the bottom. In the case of the Little Loch Broom grounds, this was sixty fathoms. Once the stone is on the bottom, a large floating-buoy is attached to the top end of the rope, and the boat is allowed to drift seawards, the line being paid out all the time.

When the end is reached, this is attached to another weighted length of rope and similarly dropped to the bottom, with the top end attached to another floating-buoy. The line is now spread out over a quarter of a mile of the sea-bed where the haddock feed. The whole operation should take about half-an-hour, and by then it is time to row back and pick up the line again, otherwise the dog-fish will play havoc with any haddock caught on the hooks.

All this sounds comparatively straightforward; but as we find to our cost unfavourable weather conditions can make it a difficult and unpleasant task. An expertly-coiled line literally whips over the side, each hook dropping exactly into position—but before you learn the art of coiling a line and handling it correctly you will have many a hook caught in your jersey and many a piece of your fingers carried away. One badly-laid hook can carry

## SHORT-LINE FISHING

fifty others with it in a dripping, heart-breaking tangle in a matter of seconds, and to attempt to catch it and sort it out while crouching in the darkness in the heaving stern of the boat is to risk having hands, arms, and face badly scratched and torn. Even locating the brightly-painted marking buoy can be very difficult, particularly in a choppy sea.

The boat we got easily enough—a large, heavy Gairloch-built craft, going cheap because there were not enough young men left on that part of the coast to manhandle it up the beach above high-water mark, an essential operation in this storm-swept, pierless area. The line and the ropes we got from an old fisherman in Ullapool, who seemed glad to be rid of them for the price of a few pints of beer. Bait was a more difficult problem. The nearest mussel-beds were six miles away in a sheltered bay at the head of the loch, and we had many a weary tramp in the cold dawn with creels of mussels on our backs, growing heavier every mile, and with streams of icy water wetting us to the skin. We tried to establish mussel colonies at different points round the headland, but the first storm always carried away our stocks into deep water.

**B**ECAUSE of the storm, our introduction to short-line fishing was not particularly happy. Our second attempt wasn't much better. On this occasion there were two pressmen with us, representatives of an illustrated magazine which wished to make a feature of the work we were doing. Their luggage included several hundred pounds' worth of camera equipment. The news that morning had been preceded by an announcement of south-easterly gales in operation in all sea areas round our part of the coast, but the photographer was due to leave the following day to fly to Haiti to cover some festival, and wanted some fishing pictures before he left.

We started out in comparatively calm weather, but were scarcely halfway across the loch when the gale started. There were no squalls this time, but a fiercer wind and wilder waves than any of us had ever experienced. We discovered later that this gale had left behind a trail of havoc, in the shape of boats smashed on the shore, telegraph-wires blown down, barns unroofed, huts, garages, and hen-houses laid flat, and hay- and corn-stacks scattered over a wide area.

Unable to do anything but run before the

wind, we fought for three hours to keep the boat either from turning broad-side on and heeling over, or from being driven on the sharp rocks of the north shore. Five of us hung on to the oars while the camera-man crouched in the bottom of the boat trying to protect his precious cameras. During a slight lull we discovered that our course was taking us far beyond the headland, and, once out in the Minch, it would be impossible to run back across the wind to shelter. We could do one of two things, either let ourselves be carried seawards in the hope that the gale would abate before we were too far from land, or we could try to fight our way to some sheltered spot on the north shore. Neither prospect was particularly encouraging. In the first case, the gale might carry us as far as Lewis—if we did not miss the islands altogether; and in the second, we might be pounded to bits on the rocks before we found a sheltered spot.

We were still debating which course to take, when John suddenly noticed a gap of about six feet wide between two large boulders, leading to a stretch of beach from which all the larger rocks had been cleared, not two hundred yards away. This was our last chance. In another few seconds we would be carried beyond the headland. Desperately we swung the boat round and drove across the wind to the opening, fighting every inch of the way. Down in the troughs of the waves, we lost sight of the opening completely; up on the crests, it looked pitifully small, with the rocks on either side sharp and menacing.

We were at the opening almost before we realised it. Rising with one extra-large wave, we saw the green water breaking on either side of us in a welter of white foam. In a flash Stewart and I were over the bows, in water up to our chests, bracing ourselves against the rocks with one hand and holding the boat steady with the other. The next big wave came immediately behind, and we were lifted bodily and hurled on to the beach. It all happened so suddenly that we did not realise what was taking place until we found ourselves lying on the stones with the boat between us, while the spent water gurgled back to join the still-angry waves.

We were all soaked to the skin and dazed, stiff and sore from struggling against the wind and the waves, and covered with cuts and bruises which we had acquired without noticing. Using the sweeps as runners, we dragged the boat as far up the beach as we

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could, then dropped down and lay panting for breath, while the rain fell in torrents and behind us the waves crashed against the rocks. Looking back on that wild heaving waste of water, it was difficult to believe that anything could live in it, yet the boat, cameras, and the six passengers had come through without sustaining any serious damage or injury. This says a lot for the skill of the old crofter boat-builder who had made the boat more than half-a-century before.

There was nothing to do but find shelter and warmth, and wait until the storm abated. This we did by visiting our friends on the peninsula, the Free Presbyterian missionary, the two English boys on their croft, and the three or four lobster-fishermen. They had seen us on the loch and had built up big fires and warmed blankets and brewed pots of tea, fully expecting the boat to be smashed to pieces and us washed ashore more dead than alive. It was then we learned that there was not a single family on the lochside that hadn't lost at least one member to the waves in the south-east gales that blow every November.

We waited for the darkness at five o'clock, for the turn of the tide at seven, for the rising of the moon at eight; but still the wind blew with undiminished fury and the waves dashed themselves on the rocks without ceasing. Somewhere about nine o'clock, warm and dry, and fortified with many strupags, we firmly declined all the offers of a bed for the night, pulled the boat higher up the beach, and faced up to the fourteen-mile walk round the head of the loch. In inky darkness, with a high wind and driving rain, we stumbled

along the rough bridle-path, picking our way carefully round the edges of the sheer cliffs. We were almost exhausted when we finally reached the hotel, where Alex MacLean, good man, was waiting for us with steaming glasses of hot toddy.

WE had another shot at the fishing a few days later, on a loch as quiet as a mill-pond. Everything went like clockwork—the finding of the feeding grounds, the setting of the lines, and the hauling in of the anchor-rope. There was a great weight of fish on the line, and it took three of us to haul it in. As it came closer, we could see yards and yards of it running down into the clear green water, with a fish on every hook. Here at last was the reward of all our troubles—hundreds of fine fat juicy haddocks. Then suddenly, crash! And the three of us fell over backwards, holding the broken end of the line in our hands. By the time we sorted ourselves out, the line had sunk out of sight, dragging with it our other marking-buoy and sixty fathoms of good rope.

All this happened a number of years ago. John is now in Canada, attending to some export business; Jim is in a land-agent's office in Oban; Stewart is driving a bus in Glasgow; while I am growing raspberries on a croft in Inverness-shire. But many a night in November when there is a gale blowing and a moon shining fitfully through the breaks in the ragged clouds we think back to our short-line fishing days and nights on the Loch of Winds.

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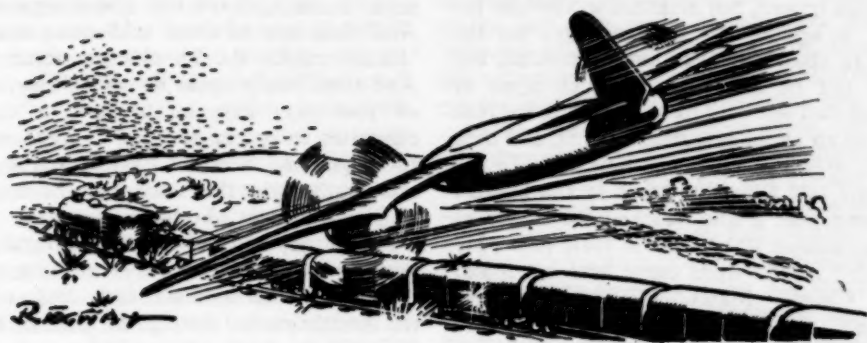
### The Loom

*The hawthorn's clad in cramoisie,  
That once was wrapt in white,  
And where soft silken banners blew  
The beech-tree's burning bright;  
And splendidly the sunset fades  
Into the winter night.*

*Yet all the time the Loom of Life  
Its throbbing never stills,  
Weaving green carpets for the fields,  
Blue mantles for the hills,  
Gay garments for the crocus-buds,  
Gold gowns for daffodils.*

K. G. SULLIVAN.





## *No Smoking in the Box-Car*

ANDREW PATON

WHEN the convoy of decrepit lorries drew up outside a big station Brady said to himself: 'So this is Paris.' Not an original thought, he reflected, but then travellers seldom have original thoughts.

He squinted round the edge of the square opening in the canvas and, beyond the driver's right ear, he could see some women shopping, two business men walking along together with brief-cases under their arms, a street-sweeper leaning on his broom-handle. It was all very normal and peaceful. There wasn't a single German soldier in sight—at least, apart from the driver and guard on each lorry.

In the background he could hear his fellow-prisoners speculating in their usual facetious way about the Folies Bergère. Brady did not join in the speculations. He was not feeling sociably inclined toward his fellow-prisoners.

Very quickly the women who were shopping realised that it was Allied prisoners of war fresh from Normandy who were in the lorries. Several of them came hurrying across and, with tears in their eyes, expressed sympathy and encouragement. Some even handed in parcels from their shopping-baskets and long, crisp loaves of bread.

Brady, being nearest to the window behind the driver, took the loaves and passed them

back to the others. He didn't want bread. He wanted cigarettes. He made signs to that effect to one of the women. She quickly understood, and went hurrying off, turning round to make a reassuring gesture as if to say: 'Now, don't be impatient and go off too soon.'

Brady was just congratulating himself, when suddenly the German sergeant in charge of the convoy came roaring along the pavement: '*Raus! Raus!*'

As they marched off down to the goods-yard Brady could see the woman coming back with a packet of cigarettes. Too late. He swore under his breath. He still had only one cigarette.

THE box-cars were supposed to hold eight horses or thirty men, but the number of prisoners divided by the number of box-cars came to sixty. They were separated into groups of sixty, handed a loaf and a tin of horsemeat each, and ushered into the dark wooden boxes with the strong sliding-doors.

A heat-wave had followed them all the way from Normandy, and now it was suddenly as if the earth had taken a leap twenty million miles nearer the sun. The air in this over-

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crowded hutch was something to be fed into you with spoons, not breathed in through the nose. It seemed too thick and hot for the body to absorb it. The lungs expanded, but could not be filled. A half-inch layer of cement-dust left over from the last cargo rose into the air as the first man came in, and then settled on hair and eyes and lungs.

Brady saw a narrow crack in the boards, sat down near it and watched the others as they scrambled to sit next to their pals. He grimaced as the word came into his mind. Pals. Chums. Mates. Muckers. Buddies. Cobbers. A hundred other terms of fond masculine affection. He felt pity mixed with contempt.

He noted with satisfaction that nobody from his own unit was here. From the sound of the voices there were Americans, Australians, and New Zealanders present, as well as representatives of many of the counties of Britain. At the moment they were slowly letting humour take over from anger and making jokes about sardines and German arithmetic and about sleeping so close together. At least, the British soldiers were. The Americans, slower to come to terms with fate, were still cursing at the way they were being treated—cursing in that uninhibited, rather careless, and slightly unnatural way of theirs.

And then Brady thought about cigarettes again. It was three days now since he had had a smoke. Three days of damnable torture made all the more damnable by the fact that he had had one cigarette in his pocket all the time.

He hadn't dared to smoke it, for nobody else had a cigarette and he knew that he would have had to pass it round the whole gang of them. That was what *they* would have done. He knew that. Indeed, it was what *they had* done. That was why they had none left. He had taken draws at the last cigarettes that had been passed round—deep, lung-filling draws.

Now he was in different company. He looked around and speculated whether the Yanks would be likely to have some cigarettes left. They must have. It was impossible to imagine Yanks without cigarettes. But just as he was beginning to get optimistic one of them settled the question for him. 'Hey, anya you guys got a Camel that you don't want?' he said to his fellow-Americans, who had all gathered in one corner. They left no doubt as to the position. 'Aw sharap, Sadsack!'

'Hey, Sadsack, don't remind us!' 'For Pete's sake, Sadsack, don't *talk* about cigarettes!' And then one of them said more quietly: 'Listen, maybe the Limey's got some left.' And then loudly again he said: 'Hey, none of you guys happens to have a coupla cigarettes to spare, do you?' There was a prolonged and facetious English roar at this, and Brady knew that once more he was the only man present who had a cigarette.

He sat very still and considered whether to produce it with some sort of an air, take a puff or two and then send it round. But even as the thought passed through his head he knew he could not do it. It would be against his nature, and a man couldn't fight his nature. He was quite an expert on his nature, was Brady. The cigarette would stay in that tin in his pocket until he could smoke it himself. He loathed himself for this, and at the same time he loathed the others for their damned gregariousness.

**W**HEN the train finally started, a small, cool draught of air came through the crack. He had chosen, with his usual quick judgment, the only spot in the box-car that had such a draught.

A twelve-inch square of dirty glass, criss-crossed with barbed-wire, high up in one corner, let in enough light to allow him to see the mass of bearded faces. The beards were all growing in their own fashion according to some obscure laws of race and heredity—fringes, tufts, mops; fair, dark, ginger; pointed, round, and square. His own was a natural Vandyke, which gave him a sort of distinction. Together with his manner, it had tended to make the others look to him for leadership, but he had made it clear that he had no ambitions that way. At the moment he could see that the leader in this truck was going to be a tall, serious Australian sergeant. Already they were asking him questions about where he thought they were being taken, and he was answering as if he knew.

Brady foresaw what would arise next. He was always a step ahead. Thirst! Half-an-hour after they had started, a small, fat American with a hobo type of beard sticking out at every angle said in a squeaky voice that one didn't, somehow, associate with Americans: 'Gee, you fellas, what couldn't I do to an iced lager right now!'

The sun was at its height, and the air in the

## NO SMOKING IN THE BOX-CAR

car was getting hotter and drier all the time. Someone told him to shut up, but half-a-dozen others took up the idea and played their own variations on it. 'No thanks,' said an English voice, 'the old pint shandy'll do me.' And a Scots voice said: 'Hey, Jock, how would ye like to be knockin' back a chaser at Lauder's right now?' And for a solid half-hour they exchanged ideas and experiences as to the longest, coolest, and most satisfying drinks they had ever had. A Welshman took ten minutes to tell them how many beers he had drunk when he had come off Snowdon on the hottest day of the year. It turned out to be twelve, and he made them all feel the exquisite, cool satisfaction as each of them went down his throat. He was quite an artist in his way.

God! thought Brady, why do they do it? They'll drive themselves mad! I shan't be able to stand it if they talk like this about smoking. But drinking was to be on their minds for a long time.

The train stopped shortly after the Welshman had finished his saga, and somebody said: 'Maybe they're going to let us have a drink now. Do you think they are, Sarge?' They all looked at the Australian sergeant. He pulled himself up to have a look out of the window and said: 'No station here, but we'll try.' And he started yelling: '*Posten! Posten! Wasser!*'

There was no reply. Instead, the heat closed in on them. The slight currents of air that had come in with the train's motion had stopped. The stuff that took the place of air in this wooden box became hotter and thicker. Men began to take their shirts off. And then their trousers and boots and socks. The sweat was running down their bodies now in little streams. Some tried to fan themselves, but all they succeeded in doing was to raise clouds of cement-dust.

After two hours Brady was the only one with his clothes on. He sat there not moving an inch, with vest and shirt and battle-dress blouse and trousers on, and somehow looked less uncomfortable than the others.

Every now and then the Australian sergeant would bang on the wooden walls and yell: '*Wasser! Hey, you lousy set of Heinie square-heads, wasser!*' And all the others would take up the refrain, varying the curses.

Suddenly, after another hour, a train passed by on the main line, heading for Paris, and within a few minutes they were on the move

again. The relief was intoxicating. Somehow or other the air managed to enter by invisible cracks and they could breathe once more. 'Wonder when we'll get there now, Sarge?' said a Cockney private. 'Oh, a couple of days, maybe' said the sergeant in his wise way.

In the evening they stopped again, but this time they got a drink. One car was unlocked at a time, and one prisoner was allowed out to fetch a bucket of water for the men in his car. Brady watched as they jostled and pushed for the door in the hope of being the one chosen to fetch the water, and maybe be allowed to put their face under the tap. As he watched, he felt the tin box in his pocket with its one cigarette. Damn them! he thought. Damn them and their water! It's a smoke I want.

And when they brought the bucket in and started to organise an elaborate system for ensuring fair shares he astonished them by shaking his head and refusing it. 'Fella,' said an American. 'what did they make you outa? Granite?' A serious-looking boy from Yorkshire asked him if he wasn't feeling well.

When they had all had a drink Brady thought: Now this is where they start talking about smokes, and God help me if they do. But they didn't. The train stopped in the siding all night, and they were allowed out in batches of ten to answer nature. They also had another drink.

**A**FTER they had started the following morning, a tall, thin guardsman, chewing at a piece of his hard German bread, introduced the next topic. 'Cor,' he said, 'what couldn't I do to about a half-a-ton o' fish an' chips!'

'Fish and chips, hell!' exclaimed an American. 'That's all you guys ever think about. What's the matter with a grilled steak and onions? Boy, there's an eating-house back home where you can get one *that* thick and smothered in onions, and I was dreaming last night I was right there.'

'Funny thing,' a Canadian said, 'I keep thinking about porridge with maple syrup on it, and, God damn it, I've never *had* porridge with maple syrup on it!'

And so they went on for an hour, while the train went puffing eastward across the great, green plain. Irish stew, fried herring, Lancashire hotpot, pumpkin pie, roast-beef and green peas, jellied eels, the foods of half-a-

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dozen countries and of a hundred districts was discussed at length and with intense local patriotism.

And then suddenly, taking Brady completely by surprise, a corporal in the Engineers changed the subject. He had just listed a complete menu, and he said: 'And, of course, you'd want a glass of port and a Corona Corona to wind up with.'

'Aw, you can stick your Corona Corona out the window,' said Sadsack. 'For me, I want Camels.' 'No, make it Players!' somebody else said, and that was it well under way.

Brady clenched his fists as they went deeper and deeper into the subject. It took them some time to get beyond the Anglo-American differences of taste, for they all took up an absolutist attitude and refused to budge. They argued like theologians, only about cigarettes instead of souls.

Eventually they passed on to the question of when a smoke was most enjoyable. There were varying degrees of support for the first one in the morning, the one after a meal, the last one at night, the one you had on the sly in the lavatory at work.

After that, it was pipe-smokers against cigarette-smokers, and the question was hammered out in the greatest detail.

As the thing went on, Brady tried harder and harder not to hear it. He thought of other things that should have been able to make him deaf to this maddening talk. He tried to visualise women, but his mind rejected them. He repeated poetry, but his memory would fail him after a couple of lines. He tried to sleep, but had never felt more wakeful in his life. He was aware that his hands were clenching and unclenching at an alarming rate, and every now and then he would feel that cigarette-tin with its one cigarette, and a physical pain would go through him.

And next there was that damned Australian sergeant with his half-Cockney whine telling them how he had gone without cigarettes for a week once when his unit was cut off in the desert. And then, when they reached their base again, he had got a packet of cigarettes, stretched himself out in a tent and smoked them slowly one after the other. He was putting his fingers to his lips and making extravagant smoking gestures as he wound up his story, and Brady was about ready to leap at him and strangle him when, with a suddenness that threw them all forward, the train stopped.

'HEY! What's happened!' Sadsack cried. The Australian sergeant pulled himself up to the window and looked out. 'The driver and fireman are running like hell,' he said. 'They're running for some trees. And there's the guards, too. What an almighty panic!'

He was just drawing in his breath to say some more when they heard the planes, and everybody was suddenly very still. They sat there for a moment with their heads cocked slightly and with their eyes not even blinking. A plane came roaring over their heads, seeming to follow the line of the train. They could hear others further off.

Somebody spoke. 'What is it, Sarge? What are they doing?'

'I don't know,' the sergeant answered. 'I can't see them.' And he twisted his head to be able to look higher into the sky. 'Oh, there's one,' he suddenly called. 'No, two. Lightnings. I think they're...' But he did not get a chance to finish. His voice was drowned by another roar, this time accompanied by the quick, hard stutter of a machine-gun. It passed over them with the slow deliberation of a falling body in a nightmare and sprayed its death casually and inefficiently.

Everyone was seated on the floor except the sergeant. They all threw themselves flat except Brady and the sergeant. Brady, sitting upright, was the only one to see the sergeant give a jerk, hold on to the ledge for a moment, and then sink slowly down into his corner.

When the next roar came Brady tried to go on sitting upright but failed. He threw himself round on his belly and put his nose to the floor and his hands over his head and cursed himself for being a fool.

'What the hell are they doing?' somebody yelled. 'Can't they see it's a P.O.W. train!' And then another stammering fury was coming down on them; and another; and another. Some said afterwards that they made ten sweeps, and some said twelve. One youth swore that they had made twenty attacks.

When the silence finally came they dare not believe that it would last. It was some minutes before anybody raised his head. It was like tempting Providence—taking too much for granted. Gradually they sat up, and it was then that the man beside the sergeant discovered that something was wrong. 'Hey, look,' he cried, 'the sarge got hit! What is it, Sarge? Can you hear me, Sarge? Hey, any



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of you chaps know anything about first-aid?' He looked round helplessly, and nobody spoke or moved.

Brady got up and went over to the corner. He got the crumpled body straightened out and saw that the wound was in the thigh. The broken end of a femur was piercing the skin. The blood, which had been plugged by the body's previous position, now flowed freely. One of the men walked away.

Brady tore a piece off his own shirt and twisted a tourniquet round the sergeant's thigh. 'Yell for the guards,' he said. As they started to shout and hammer, he thought: 'Oh, God, when shall I get a smoke!'

THE guards were in no hurry to return to the train. It was about twenty minutes before they appeared, and then they started at the other end and came along truck by truck, methodically and slowly.

The great sliding-door which the prisoners were so impotent to move took on the appearance of a sullen jailer. They could feel their anger mounting against it. Every now and then they would start thumping it and shouting: 'Schnell! Schnell! Man verwundert!'

At last there were noises outside the car and the door was opened. A cluster of guards lifted up a British medical-officer who had been in another truck and pushed him in. He took a quick, professional look at the leg, and as he did so the sergeant regained consciousness. He looked up, grey, tired, and puzzled. 'You'll be all right, sergeant,' the doctor said, easing the tourniquet to release some blood, and then he spoke in German to the guards and jumped down to hurry on to the next truck.

Brady's mind was as clear as crystal. He

knew what to do now. He waited patiently until the one stretcher had been used to carry the wounded and dead from the other trucks over to a narrow road where an ambulance was now reversing into position. He waited until the guards had brought the stretcher along and had climbed into the truck with it. He helped them to ease it under the sergeant.

And then, while the others were wishing the sergeant the best of luck in their own individual ways, he took the tin out of his pocket. There was a sudden silence as he opened it, took the solitary cigarette out and threw the tin carelessly away. 'Anybody got a match?' he said.

The silence lasted another couple of seconds and then it was broken by half-a-dozen voices offering matches. Brady took a box, put the cigarette between his lips, lit it, and drew the smoke deep into his lungs in two draws which, to the others, looked quite casual, but were in actual fact the most consciously enjoyable things he had ever done. Then he handed the cigarette to the wounded Australian and said: 'Good luck, sergeant.' The guards took the sergeant out then and locked the doors again.

Everybody was looking at Brady in the half-light of the big wooden box. A boy belonging to the East Surreys said: 'That was very decent of you, sir.' An American corporal said: 'Brother! Did anybody say iron will!'

And Brady said: 'Well, what are you all looking so miserable about? Let's have a sing-song and cheer ourselves up. Come on now, what about "Clementine" to start with?' And, in a shaky but tuneful baritone, he started on the first verse, his Vandyke wagging up and down as he sang, and the other men gradually joining in as the spirit of his singing reached them.

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## Sea-Gulls

*They've left the roaring of the seas,  
The flying spindrift, curling spray,  
The Viking voices of the breeze,  
They've left them all and come away  
To swoop in sudden, snowy bands  
Above the wintry countryside,  
Where over lonely, level lands  
Floodwater pours its waveless tide.*

*Their crying fills the inland air  
With ancient spells of sea and shore,  
Of wild and lovely spaces where  
The ocean storms a mountain-door;  
And magic in the sea-bird's wing  
Unfolds against this southern sky  
Old hills in sunset glimmering  
And crested waters ranging by.*

ELIZABETH FLEMING.

# Peat-Fire Memories

## XI.—Our Clothes

KENNETH MACDONALD

IT is believed by some that all Highlanders wear the kilt and that they roam the hillsides, the heather between their toes, brandishing a claymore, and nursing a bottle of 'cream of the barley' fresh from the illicit still down the glen. The pity of all this is that it is not true. Indeed, I could count on one hand the number of people I saw wearing the kilt in the Isles during my half-century of residence there, and those who did wear it were visitors or tourists. As for the claymores, there is no more thatch to hide them, and the still in the glen is as still as the glen itself. One or two loyal crofters I knew wore the Glengarry, but they were scorned and referred to as Rob Roys. The people in the Isles did not worry much about dress, and certainly not about fashion, and, at any rate, fashions were well out of date before they reached the remote Isles.

All married women wore the mutch. It was an unwritten law that all other forms of head-dress had to be discarded on marriage. The *currac* or mutch gave a calm natural dignity to the wearer. A deal of time was spent on the goffering of the mutch and most houses had an *iarunn caol* ('narrow iron') or goffering-iron. It was in size and shape like a test-tube and was fixed to an iron base by a goose-neck stem. A long iron spike was first heated in the fire and pushed into the tube to give the necessary heat. Then the curls of white ribbon which adorned the front of the mutch were pressed round the tube. The starch enabled the beautiful trimming to remain firm. Manufactured starch had found its way to the Isles at this time, but many people were still not too familiar with its use and preferred to use the starch that they made themselves from potatoes.

Hair styles did not change. The hair was

parted in the middle and gathered in a cue or bun at the back of the head. The 'crowning glory' was never cut, and anyone doing so was looked upon as being common. At work on the croft or about the house the women wore a *beannag*. This was a large handkerchief folded diagonally and tied round the head as girls wear head-squares to-day. So, evidently, instead of being behind the times with styles and fashion, the Isles would appear to have been half-a-century ahead.

Ear-rings were worn by both sexes, not because they were considered stylish or fashionable, but because they were reported to be good for weak eyes. Ear-rings which clipped on were no use, as the important point about the weak eyes was the piercing of the ear-lobes. Indeed, many people had their lobes pierced who did not wear ear-rings at all. No doubt there was much suffering from weak eyes because of the constant blanket of peat-smoke which always filled the black house. The inmates got quite accustomed to it, but strangers emerged from the house with streaming eyes.

FOR torso garb the women wore a tight-fitting polka, with a long row of buttons down the front. Blouses buttoning at the back would have been very inconvenient as all the babies were breast fed. The women dressed for warmth and comfort rather than for style and fashion. The thick heavy skirt, which reached down to the heels, had several rows of black braid along the lower hem. In the back of the skirt was a pocket, which usually contained a handkerchief, a key and reel on a string, and probably some peppermints. As boys, we always knew when we saw granny's hand fumbling for the back

## PEAT-FIRE MEMORIES

pocket in her skirt that something nice was forthcoming.

There was no dainty underwear in these days. Underneath the thick heavy skirt were the *cota strianach* or striped skirt and the *cota ban* or white skirt. The outer skirt was rolled up to form a *dronnag* for the creel. The creel rested on the *dronnag*, and a good *dronnag* meant a comfortable load rather than a chafed back. The *iris* or strap went round the chest, and this arrangement left the hands free for knitting.

Dark stockings were worn by the younger women and white ones by the older ones. The stockings reached the knee, where they were tied by a garter of string or a thin strip of cotton material, and as the skirts were worn down to the heels the garters could not be seen. One old woman who chewed tobacco regularly kept it in her stocking above the garter.

MOST people had boots of some kind, but I do remember seeing the *cuarain*. They were old strips of woollen or cotton rags which were wound round and round the feet until the whole foot was covered up to the ankle. It was a long tedious business getting them on and off. Hence the Gaelic proverb: *Feumaidh fear nan cuarain eirigh uair roimh fhear nam brog* ('The man with the *cuarain* must get up an hour before the man with the boots.') The *cuarain* should not be confused with *bonnagan* and *osanan*. The *cuarains* were for all day use and served the same purpose as boots do to-day. The *bonnag* was an ordinary stocking cut round the ankle and the lower part used in the same way as ankle-hose are worn to-day. The *osan*, on the other hand, was composed of the whole stocking with the sole cut away. The bare sole of the foot was on the ground and the rest of the leg was covered up to the knee. The *osan* was used mainly at the peats or when putting out the manure. The ground underfoot at both these jobs was soft and pleasant to walk on, and with the *osan* it was much cooler than if boots were worn. Women visiting relatives in villages many miles apart wore the *osan* all the way and walked on the grass verge by the roadside. When going to town it was customary to wear the *osan* until the outskirts of the place were reached, whereupon the *osan* was exchanged for boots. The same procedure was followed on the return journey. The

boots were only worn during the short stay in town.

Shoes were not very fashionable. Lacing-boots were preferred. This is accountable for by the fact that the people spent much of their time on the moor rounding up sheep or taking home the cattle. Shoes, therefore, were not of much use to them, as they were too low to keep out the water on an ever-wet moor. After the lacing-boots, elastic-sided boots became fashionable and were worn to the church on Sundays and to prayer-meetings. Later, some of the girls who followed the fishing as splitters and gutters to the east coast of Scotland and England took home buttoned-boots, which were at that time considered to be the height of fashion.

AS previously stated, the women parted the hair in the middle and the mutch was worn so as to show about an inch or so of the shed at the front. That, in the main, is a picture of the granny of fifty years ago, but perhaps the best picture of her was the one given by the little boy in school who was asked to describe a granny. He said a granny was an old lady who sat on a stool by the fireside and would let no one harm you. There is a great deal of wisdom in these words, and there are few who do not recollect, when clouds were dark after a day of misdemeanours, sheltering behind the 'old lady who sat on a stool by the fireside,' knowing full well that her kind words would calm the troubled waters.

Two types of shawl were in use—the *plaide bheag* and the *plaide mhor*, the little plaid and the big plaid. The small one covered the head and shoulders and was for use around the house and barns. The larger one, which was used for more special occasions, such as prayer-meetings and distant visits, covered the whole body down below the knees. It was probably a relic of the old tartan plaid which served as a blanket as well. I have only seen two tartan plaids in my village.

The men, too, were in the fashion in their own way. Most of them had a good suit for Sundays and special functions. Many crofters went to church then in morning-coat and soft-hat—a round flat kind of hat with a low crown. That gave way to the ordinary lounge-suit. Islesmen preferred dark colours for their suits, and practically every young man in Lewis to-day possesses a dark navy-blue suit.

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Coats were all dark and reached down to the ankles.

The present type of collar was unknown, but boiled-shirts were used at weddings and it was customary for each man to have his jacket off at the wedding-table. I know one man who got married in the same boiled-shirt as his father got married in thirty years before.

The old-fashioned dicky, a combined stiff false shirt-front and collar, was the fashion. It had the big advantage that it could be worn with any shirt and it was therefore not necessary to change. Crofters at that time did not take kindly to collars. They were not used to them and felt more comfortable without them. And what a job it was to get his 'lordship' dressed up in his dicky and tie. Sometimes the whole household were involved in the ordeal. There was no hole for the back-stud in the crofter's working shirt and tempers were well frayed by the time a pin was got through the starched collar and the shirt.

At one wedding Coinneach Sile was all dressed up and sitting at the top of the table complete with dicky. The sight amused Iain Thormaoid who commented to his neighbour: '*Seall air Coinneach Sile is an "dicky" cas a gobhalagan mu amhaich*' ('Look at Kenny Sile with the dicky astride his neck as if riding a horse').

When the new laundry was opened in the town of Stornoway one crofter remarked to his neighbour that it would be very handy. 'Ach,' came the reply, 'your dicky and mine will not keep them very busy.'

During the First World War there was a regulation in Stornoway that men in uniform would not be served with any refreshments in the local public-houses. This was no hardship to the locals home on leave, who could change into their civilian suits, but the overseas troops, many of whom were Canadians, were very disgruntled about it. So they borrowed any old garments to get over the difficulty. The only suit Tormod Iain, home on leave from Canada, could get was his father's Sunday suit. He 'borrowed' it while his father was at the peats, and joined his pals in town for a convivial evening. He carried a supply home with him in order to give his relatives and friends in the village a drink. This meant a call at practically every house in the village. Tormod was well under the weather by the time he got halfway round. He fell on the muddy road once or twice and finally had to be helped home.

But there was one thing on his mind which seemed to worry him, for he kept mumbling to himself all the way: '*Briogais Shabaid m'athair, briogais Shabaid m'athair*.' ('My father's Sunday trousers, my father's Sunday trousers').

THE most handsome and the most tidy of men's wear was without any doubt the *briogais chlo* and *peitean mor*. The *briogais chlo* were trousers made of what was locally called Buckie tweed, a thick woollen brown cloth commonly worn in these days by east-coast fishermen. The *peitean mor* or big vest, of the same material, was a cross between a jacket and a vest. It was tight-fitting like a vest, but had sleeves like a jacket and two rows of buttons down the front. When worn with the *boineid bian* or fur cap, it was beautiful to look at on tall well-built six-footers who would have done credit to any Guard's regiment. The fur cap had no peak and was not unlike the headgear of a Cossack.

The womenfolk knitted beautiful jerseys for the men, jerseys of fern, rope, and herring-bone design. These were close-fitting and had a row of pearl buttons up the neck. All the men's socks were also knitted, and even to-day in rural districts, I doubt if many shop-bought socks can be found. They, too, had fancy patterns, the diamond pattern being the most popular.

The men's underpants were made of *plangaid* or blanket weave, produced from native wool carded, spun, and woven on the spot. As most villages had a few weavers, and as there was plenty of wool available, there was an ample supply of blankets and of blanket-cloth for pants. They were heavy, warm pants, and were needed in the cold weather. In the summertime, however, they were too warm, and then the men were obliged to discard their trousers and work in their *plangaid* pants all day.

It was *infra dig* for the young lads to have any underwear at all, except a shirt. They wore corduroy or moleskin trousers and, as a rule, no cap. A friend of mine received a parcel of twenty pairs of boy's shorts to be distributed among the more needy in the district, but he could not get any of the boys to wear them, because they were shorts, and they were afraid the older boys would be laughing at them.

There were many poor people in the Isles



## MALAYA'S BADMINTON CROWN

in these days. There was one boy in the school I attended who wore his mother's polka for a whole winter; another was wearing an R.N.R. jumper, and quite a few had naval caps. In some districts many of the young men brought home old rejected tunics from the militia training-camp at Fort George. One headmaster, when the inspector was due, paraded as many boys as possible who had a scarlet tunic, to provide a guard of honour for the visitor.

Even if people in the Isles had good clothes, in these days they had no facilities for keeping them clean and tidy. There were no ward-

robes, and they could not be left hanging behind doors or walls because of the peat-reek and dripping thatch. All good clothing had to be folded and packed in one of the kists along the wall. The women had large circular tin boxes, about a foot to fourteen inches in diameter and about ten inches deep, to keep the *currac* tidy and nice. Ishbel Hearnach kept her tin box under the bed, but the children must have been playing with it and left the lid open. Imagine Ishbel's dismay when she went for her beautiful mutch for the Sunday Communion to find that the cat was rearing a family of kittens inside it.

# Malaya's Badminton Crown

EDWARD PETERS

TO some of us Malaya is the land that wins more dollars for the Commonwealth than the whole of the United Kingdom put together; to others it means guerrilla warfare in the jungles and rubber estates; but to sportsmen of the world Malaya means only one thing—badminton. In the game of the racket and shuttlecock Malaya leads the world. She holds the Thomas Cup, the world badminton trophy, and successfully retained it in last year's triennial contest. Wong Peng Soon, her No. 1 player and the holder of the All-England Badminton Championship, successfully defended his title for the second year running in the 1952 competition. British sportsmen, who traditionally support the underdog, the smaller against the bigger, should rejoice in the fact that their tiny Commonwealth partner, with a population of only 5 millions, should during the years since the Second World War have carried off world badminton honours time and time again in the face of such powerful opponents as the United States and India, not to mention the Mother Country herself.

IT is perhaps unexpected that Malaysians should be pre-eminent in a sport that now takes its name from a little Cotswold village, the country seat of the Duke of Beaufort. But the game had been played in India long before it arrived in England in 1873 and acquired the name by which it is known today. It was probably first brought to Malaya from India by members of the Indian Civil Service who staffed the administration of the Straits Settlements until 1867. But whatever the method of carrying the seed, the plant is now in full vigour. In Malaya every street-corner has its little open-air badminton court, usually with a surface of hard-packed sand or earth. Every town has its host of badminton 'parties' or clubs, and every fine evening sees thousands of young Malaysians trying out their judgment, skill, and stamina in the subtleties of the drop-shot and the power of the smash, in what has become Malaya's national game.

Although badminton has advanced from a popular garden pastime among the staid ladies and gentlemen of the Victorian age to the fast and strenuous sport which we know

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to-day, the principles and the rules remain the same, with some small modifications for championship play. The court is a shortened version of a lawn-tennis court, but with a net which is 5 feet from the ground. The game consists entirely of volleying the feathered shuttlecocks, and can be extremely fast; in fact, it has been said by experts at both games that a single at badminton requires more stamina than a single at lawn-tennis.

In clubs controlled by the Badminton Association of England only the covered-court game is recognised: and all championship matches in Malaya take place under cover by artificial light. But normally, owing to the great humidity and heat, the game is played in the open air in the champion country. It is perhaps because badminton is so cheap under these conditions, almost any flat piece of ground suitably marked off sufficing, that it has secured such universal support in Malaya. Certainly the Malayan climate is not particularly favourable to this energetic pastime, save that there is an almost complete absence of the high winds which are the ruin of open-air badminton. Numerous among the players are the tens of thousands of police, regular, special, and volunteer, who spend their days and nights guarding the estates and mines which are so vital to the economy of the Commonwealth. In their off-duty hours they turn to the game for relaxation, for it is only badminton which can be played in the small open-spaces available by or near the police-stations of the countryside and yet give exercise to as many people in a two-hour session as any other sport, except the big team-games.

Ease of playing space apart, it has also been important for the spread of the sport in Malaya that, except for the shuttles, which are produced by a flourishing local industry, and for the rackets, which are not expensive, no special equipment is necessary. There are, of course, the aristocracy of badminton in Malaya, who rejoice in specially-constructed courts, with enormous arc-lamps fitted to allow of play in the cool of the night. But young Malaya prefers two bamboo-poles and a piece of string to a proper net, and, scorning the fads and refinements of modern sports-

wear, plays more often than not barefooted and stripped to the waist.

THE standard of play throughout Malaya is remarkably high, in spite of the fact that there is no first-class coaching and that even the top players are self-taught. How far they have progressed by natural ability and application may be judged by their record in international competition and by the fact that some have even been asked to go to the United States as coaches themselves.

Enthusiasm for the sport has received strong impetus from Malaya's recognition as a world-beater at the international badminton tourneys for the Thomas Cup since the War. The Cup, a trophy presented for international competition by Sir George Thomas, the well-known player and authority on the game, is a post-war innovation, but has already assumed the importance of an ancient institution and is keenly contested every three years by the leading nations. The play is organised on the zone system adopted in the lawn-tennis Davis Cup, and over a dozen countries compete every three years, among which the United States, India, Denmark, and the United Kingdom are, apart from Malaya, the most prominent. Every Malayan schoolboy and club player dreams of one day representing Malaya in the championship contests and seeks assiduously to improve in skill and general standard of play.

The greatest of the country's players are Malayan Chinese—Wong Peng Soon, Ong Poh Lim, Ooi Teik Hock, the Choongs (now at Cambridge), and scores of others. Perhaps they have the greatest vigour and stamina of the many races domiciled in Malaya. But there are no racial barriers or preferences; Malays, Tamils, Sikhs, Eurasians, Europeans, all follow the sport with equal enthusiasm and participate with equal keenness in a spirit of amity which is an encouraging sign for the future of a country harassed by racial differences. Malaya's common interest and importance in one of the most interesting of amateur sports may yet have a wider significance for the political future of her different peoples.



## The Dead Fox

STANISLAUS LYNCH

WE E Bandy strolled disconsolately towards the village. His sole possession was the orphan two-shilling-piece in his pocket, and he was deeply concerned as to how he would manage till the end of the week—till the horse-fair on Friday, in fact. He knew he would earn good money there; but until Friday, unless he met some soft-hearted soul or earned a few shillings by some means or other, he would be in a very serious predicament.

As he neared the village he saw Benny-the-Bills pasting up notices on the gable of an old storehouse. 'You're middling early at the bill-posting, Benny,' said he.

'Good-morrow, Wee Bandy. Ah, not so early. Only the ould alarm-clock stopped I'd have been out long ago. It's near nine o'clock now, and look at me, only pasting up me first bill.'

'What's them bills for, anyway? Another auction or something?'

'No, I got them yesterday from the County Council. They're going to pay five shillings apiece for dead foxes.'

'Be the hokey farmer! I could do with a few five shillingses this blessed and holy day. In sowl I could. Never was more awanting! What does a body have to do?'

'The whole business is on the bills.'

'Bedamn, but them County Council fellows use tremendous big words!' said Wee Bandy as he gazed with a puzzled expression on the heading: EXTERMINATION OF VERMIN. 'What does that first jaw-breaker mean?' he asked. 'A body would need to be college-bred to get his mouth round a word like that.'

'It's about vermin.'

'Be the suffering duck! Vermin! Are the County Council going to start some new thing?'

'Ah, have sense, man! Aren't foxes vermin?'

'I'm surprised at you, Benny-the-Bills, surprised at you. Classing a dacent animal like a fox as vermin! Many's the good pound I earned riding with the foxhounds.'

'Maybe so, but that was up the country. Down here is a bit too rocky for hunting-horses. When you used to be working for Mr Jerry Regan, a few years ago, the hunt came this way one day and the huntsmen thought they'd never get out of it alive.'

'Ah, them were the days!'

'Well, wouldn't they come again, if you'd quit the drink? But, howsomever, I hear for a fact that in some parts of the mountains the foxes have the people eaten out of house and home.'

'Well, do you know, I'd think it hard to

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murder an unfortunate fox,' said Wee Bandy, as thoughts returned to him of the days when he worked with horses and hounds. Then, as his hand slipped into the pocket of his shabby riding-breeches, his fingers closed on the two-shilling-piece that was his sole worldly possession.

It had a depressing effect. He watched Benny-the-Bill's paste-brush whisk clammily across the black wording of the white notice. He began to calculate how much money he would have left if he bought snare-wire. 'Twould be a slow return for his money, and very uncertain.

His thoughts were interrupted by Benny-the-Bill's remark: 'You ought to catch a few foxes, Wee Bandy, and bring them up to the Barracks. The Sergeant will give you five shillings apiece for . . .'

'Be the hokey farmer, I wouldn't take a fortune and go next or near him! Now, didn't the County Council pick on a nice paymaster!'

'What need you care, if you go up to him when you're sober—that is, of course, if you catch a fox.'

'Aw, there's a lot of ifs in it, Benny, me jewel. I'll be going on. So long.'

Wee Bandy moved off towards the village and thought about trapping foxes. 'Twas a slow business, and the Sergeant complicated it. He remembered past encounters with that guardian of the peace, and they were not pleasant. Still, five shillings were five shillings.

THE village of Ballykilmore was awakening to a new day. Shop-assistants were erecting wooden trestles by the kerbs of the footpaths in front of drapers' shops for the display of goods. Coat-hangers were hooked to a row of nails driven into the base of each shop's signboard and the display of ladies' coats, frocks, and costumes would have done credit to the room of a wardrobe-mistress in a theatre. Men's attire was on display, too, but it was drab and colourless by comparison. Men's boots, however, stole the footwear honours. Their make was probably responsible for this, since boots, unlike shoes, had a tag on the back which enabled them to be hung up for display. Uprights about eight feet tall, with foot-long cross-ribs, were used for the purpose. Boots hung from both ends of each cross-rib, so that six or seven pairs, which hung one above the other, were dis-

played simultaneously in the very minimum of floor-space.

Wee Bandy wondered why the shop-assistants took so much trouble to arrange the draperies when he knew that at the first hint of a shower of rain armfuls of the draperies would be gathered frantically, returned to the shops unceremoniously, and dumped in mangled heaps on the counters.

Still, day after day, this continued. It was a morning ritual which indicated that Ballykilmore was awakening to the prospects of a new day. But the drapers were not alone in this outdoor trade display. Bartenders rolled out their empty barrels and placed them up-ended in a row on the edge of the footpath in front of each public-house. Empty symbols, no doubt, but they were indicative of the locality's thirst, and that thirst's choice of publican.

But by far the greatest displays were those of the grocery-shops. Many of the grocery-shops in Ballykilmore, like those in several small towns in Ireland, were a combination of any or all of the following: grocery; hardware; timber, coal, and iron; farm machinery and implements; funeral undertaking; meal, bran, and seeds; household furniture; veterinary preparations; bicycles and bicycle parts; confectionery and sweets; newsagency and lending-library; occasionally a bakery; and invariably a public bar. The displays in front of some grocery-shops were, therefore, bewildering in their variety: pots, pans, porringers; galvanised buckets and radios; pig-troughs and bicycles; gramophones and barbed-wire; tea-chests and field-gates; sides of bacon and bags of fertilisers; spades, shovels, and butter-pats; rope reins, plough-chains, and violins; and, as if to ensure that the passer-by could not possibly be unaware of one particular shop's existence, the gay yellow and vivid red of a new mowing-machine seemed to floodlight its entire display.

The cheerful colourings of the new reaper did not brighten Wee Bandy's gloom as he strolled aimlessly down the street and sought in vain for a solution to his financial difficulties. Five shillings for a fox was good enough, he mused, but the fox had first to be caught . . . Then he saw a big collie-dog spring into a strange pony-trap that stood in front of the saddler's, and Wee Bandy leapt into action. He ran down the street calling: 'Chew, dog! Go 'way, dog! Chew, I tell you!' and he had just grabbed the dog by the tail when



# CHRISTMAS

problems made easy



now let's see—a not-too large!—a not-too small!—perhaps a not-they have one!



let's really get down to this!—maybe some more coffee?—must be something?—this is getting out of hands!



no need to panic old chap!—must steady up!—something here!—yes I'm sure that's it!—I've got it!!!



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*The Editor.*

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## THE DEAD FOX

the owner of the trap rushed out from the saddler's and yelled: 'Be the light that shines, what are you putting a dog into my trap for?'

The man was Johnny-the-Lad.

'It's trying to take him out I am,' said Wee Bandy, recovering from the shock of the moment. 'He jumped in while you were in the saddler's, Mister Johnny.'

'None o' yer Mister Johnnying me! Gather him and yourself away from about me or I'll call the police in a pair o' minutes!'

'I thought you had the meat for the dinner in it, and I didn't want to see him eat it.'

'You're getting mighty attentive all of a sudden, you two-faced, bandy-legged little runt! A lot you care about me or my new trap.'

'I didn't know who owned the trap, Mister Johnny, but I didn't want to let the dog . . .'

'G'long, you robber! You and the saddler are well matched. You drank my money in Clugga Fair, and now he wants to rob me of a fox-skin.'

The mention of a fox made Wee Bandy become all attention. His mind flashed back to Benny-the-Bills and the new notices that were still wet on the hoardings. 'Did you say a fox, Mister Johnny?' he asked, almost afraid to believe his own ears.

'I did,' snapped Johnny-the-Lad, whose row with the saddler seemed to have completely eclipsed the fact that he should not have been even on speaking-terms with Wee Bandy. Due to his chagrin with the saddler, Johnny-the-Lad seemed now to have forgotten that in the horse-fair of Clugga a few days ago Wee Bandy had purloined the change of his pound and drank it.

'And what did the saddler say about the fox-skin?' wheedled Wee Bandy, as though nothing had happened between them.

'Don't talk to me about that ould turn-coat,' stormed Johnny-the-Lad angrily. 'Him telling me all along that he'd give me a pound for a fox-skin any day in the week; and now, when I bring him one, the biggest fox ever you seen—he's the half full of the trap—the saddler tells me they're gone out o' fashion!'

'Out o' fashion, Mister Johnny?'

'Aye, out o' fashion. He says the women won't wear red-fox furs nowadays.'

'Deed the fashions have changed, Mister Johnny,' and a light of hope seemed to dawn in Wee Bandy's eyes. 'Ah, sure the whole world's gone a kind o' daft this while back, Mister Johnny. Sure, at the present moment

you wouldn't get three halfpence for a whole cartload of fox-skins.'

'Well, I'll try the Doctor before I go home. He might like to have him stuffed or make a rug out of the skin or something.'

'God bless you, and have sense, this holy and blessed day, Mister Johnny. Sure, the Doctor wouldn't sleep in a house if them class of quare ornaments were at large.'

'Well, he's the only one in the town might make some use of the skin, so I'll try him, anyway.'

Wee Bandy heard this with dismay, and his fingers tightened about his orphaned two-shilling-piece. A number of dogs had now collected around the pony-trap, but he did not mind these. His whole interest was concentrated on preventing the Doctor or anyone else getting hold of the fox. He must invent some sort of a yarn.

'YOU needn't be going next or near the Doctor's house, Mister Johnny,' Wee Bandy advised, 'because he's not there. I was talking to him not ten minutes ago. He was . . . he was going out to look at a foal on grass and he axed me to go with him. Sure, what would he want with a fox, anyway?'

'That's queer then, for I was sure I saw him going up the street a while ago.'

'You're gravely mistaken, then, Mister Johnny, for when I was above helping Benny-the-Bills to stick up a few posters the Doctor stopped his car beside us and axed me to go with him. You can ax Benny-the-Bills if you don't believe me. I was helping him to stick up notices for the . . .'

'For what?'

'For the County Council.'

'What were they about?'

'Warble-fly orders or potato-blight notices or something—I'm not real sure. I'm a very poor scholar indeed, Mister Johnny. But sure, that's all rambling away from the fix you're in with this ould smelly fox.'

'He's not smelly. I only shot him last night.'

'Well, we'll not argufy about it, Mister Johnny, but maybe you'll let me say a word before the dogs of the town ates the pair of us. I know I did you a mean turn when I pocketed your change in Clugga Fair. Only I had a few drinks extra at the time I'd never dream of doing the like.' Wee Bandy found it convenient to forget that he had been cold

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sober. 'How and ever, I'm sorry now, and to show that I'm willing to do you a good turn I'll bury that ould fox for you and save you the bother of having to do it yourself.'

'Bury him, indeed!' said Johnny-the-Lad as he opened the door of the pony-trap. 'Bury him, indeed! And his skin worth a pound—only for the change of fashions. And if the Doctor was at home maybe 'tis two pounds I'd be getting.'

'Two shillings you mean. But if you want to waste a whole day waiting till the Doctor comes back . . .'

'Here, take him yourself for ten shillings when you *are* so anxious—and I hope you get a pound for his . . .'

'I'll risk two shillings on him. Take it or leave it.'

'Make it five and I'll . . .'

'No. Two. All I have in the whole wide world,' and that was the most truthful statement that had escaped Wee Bandy's lips for a long time. 'Say yes or no,' he added, as he held out his hand to seal the bargain. 'Say yes or no, before the whole dogs of the town make mincemeat of the pair of us!'

'All right,' said Johnny-the-Lad as he grabbed the corn-sack that lay in the well of the pony-trap, 'take him with you.'

'Here's the money, Mister Johnny. Give me back a few pence for a luck-penny.'

'I'll give you the ould corn-sack for a luck-penny. Here's the whole bundle. Away with you now and good luck to you.'

Wee Bandy lowered the sack to the ground and stooped to unfasten the cord that was tied around its throat. Inside he saw one of the biggest dog-foxes he had ever seen. While he examined his purchase he heard someone approach Johnny-the-Lad. He looked up and saw Benny-the-Bills, and in the same glance saw the Doctor step out from the newsagent's at the end of the street. A chill fear gripped Wee Bandy's heart.

'Good-morning to you both,' sang out Benny-the-Bills merrily.

As Johnny-the-Lad's back was turned, Wee Bandy acted instantly. In a flash he had gathered up the sack and its heavy-smelling contents and flung it skilfully towards the pony's front-legs.

'Are them the County Council warble-fly notices?' asked Johnny-the-Lad as he had a leg upraised to enter his pony-trap.

But the pony gave him no time to hear the reply. With a snort of horror and a lightning

plunge it side-stepped the evil-smelling corn-sack and bolted in terror down the street. Johnny-the-Lad had a grip of the back of the trap but had not a hold of the reins.

'Run, Mister Johnny, run!' yelled Wee Bandy, with a sparkle of devilment brightening his weather-beaten, sandy-bristling features. 'That's the boy can spang it,' he remarked coolly to Benny-the-Bills. 'He's taking about four steps to the furlong! Stay where you are. You needn't be trying to run after him. He's into the trap now and he'll have the pony stopped at the end of the town.'

Shop-assistants rushed to doorways to view the runaway.

'It was a damnable thing to throw that ould sack to frighten the pony when you got the man's back turned,' said Benny-the-Bills. 'He damned nearly made jiblets of the new mowing-machine that's on show down below on the street.'

'But he was just going to open your roll of bills,' said Wee Bandy, as he collected his sack and began to walk up the street towards the Barracks.

'And what harm if he did?'

'I suppose, Benny avick, you never noticed that all the dogs of the town are around us?'

'Well, I felt a quare smell o' the sack, but I . . .'

'I know you'll keep a secret. It's a fox. I got it from Johnny-the-Lad. He couldn't have seen any of the bills, for you were only sticking up the first of them when I met you this morning. So he couldn't know anything about the five shillings bounty that the County Council will pay for every fox!'

'Be the hokey farmer, you're the fly boy!'

'I had to give the ould skinflint two shillings for it, but I'm making three shillings profit by walking a few yards to the Barracks!'

'Bedamn, but you're as fly as paint! It's no wonder you made the pony skedaddle before Johnny-the-Lad saw my bundle of bills.'

'You and your bills were bad enough, but I happened to see the Doctor coming as well.'

'An' what difference did that make?'

'That's another story, Benny, me jewel. He's supposed to be out looking at a foal. I'll tell you about that when I come out of the Barracks,' said Wee Bandy, with a wink of mischief, then added, with a grin of devilment: 'I'm sure the Sergeant will be surprised to see me. I don't often call for tea!'

'So long,' he called to Benny-the-Bills as he reached the Barracks gate.

## THE DEAD FOX

'So long, Wee Bandy, and . . . don't let the Sergeant boil your eggs too hard!'

THE Sergeant was weeding a flower-bed. He was a big, decent, inoffensive man who rarely interfered with people unless they asked for trouble. If they did, then he was capable of giving them more than they bargained for. He did not nurse vindictiveness against casual lawbreakers and was amazingly tolerant to the foibles of human nature, yet he had a fairly shrewd knowledge of every wrongdoer within a radius of ten miles of his station. He was a heavy-bodied, easy-going, ponderously-spoken policeman, who never went anywhere—he always proceeded.

The Barracks was a pleasant modern building of the bungalow type. 'Bedad, Wee Bandy,' said the Sergeant as he straightened up from the task of weeding the flower-bed, 'you must have lost your way! 'Tis seldom you visit us without my having to send a couple of my men to carry out the invitation!'

'Ach indeed, Sergeant, you're always in good humour,' said Wee Bandy nervously, as he tried to smile away the unpleasantness of their last physical encounter.

'Maybe I am, but upon my word I thought at first my eyes were playing tricks—for you don't often pay a courtesy call to the Barracks!'

'Well, God spare your health, Sergeant, this holy and blessed day, but them flowers are a credit to you. A credit, Sergeant, no mistake.'

'Oh, they improve the look of things. You know, Wee Bandy, a Barracks isn't such a terrifying place when a man sees it in his sobriety on a good morning.'

'I'm glad it helps you in the mornings, Sergeant, though, for myself, if I was after a hard night, I'd rather a jorum of whisky as a pick-me-up than all the flowers in . . .'

'Who's talking about whisky? Now, I'd advise you keep a civil tongue in your head. I can't swallow facetiousness so early in the day.'

'That's a drink I never tasted meself, but I've . . .'

'Oh, you're a nuisance! And if the groceries in that sack of yours taste as high as their odour . . .'

'Deed, Sergeant, it's not meat for the dinner I have in it at all, at all—it's a fox.'

'A fox?'

'Aye, surely, Sergeant, a fox. I saw by the County Council notices that you're giving five

shillings apiece for them, so I brought you one.'

'You're a great man, Wee Bandy, a great man. I'm glad to see you striving to earn an honest living,' said the Sergeant admiringly as he dusted the dry clay off his hands. 'The country's swarming alive with foxes. Come on inside to my office and we'll regulate matters.'

'Indeed I will, Sergeant,' said Wee Bandy, and obeyed promptly. It was the first time in his chequered career that he had ever entered that sombre edifice without some slight persuasion at his elbows.

The Sergeant's office was a small, bright room with cream-distempred walls and olive-green windows.

'There's been a big number of foxes killed lately' said the Sergeant as he took a file of papers from a filing-cabinet and went over to his desk. 'Where did you catch this fellow?' he added as he sat down.

'Yesterday,' said Wee Bandy, not wishing to commit himself.

'I said where,' insisted the Sergeant. 'What townland? I'll have to put the locality in the claim-form.'

'Oh, beg pardon, Sergeant, I thought you said when,' Wee Bandy answered as he tried to cope with a poser that taxed the resources of even such an inventive brain as his. 'I didn't know nothing about having to fill claim-forms. I just thought you'd give me five shillings for it and let me go off about me business.'

'This form must state the date on which the fox was killed, the townland, and numerous other particulars. When the form is completed correctly in my presence and with my signature you post it to the County Council and they send you your cheque for five shillings.'

'Be the hokey farmer!' exclaimed Wee Bandy as he dropped the sack.

'Now, where was he killed?'

'Well, he was kilt yesterday—in Lackenclare,' Wee Bandy ventured, safely mentioning a wild district where foxes abounded.

'Lackenclare,' said the Sergeant, slowly spelling out the word as he wrote. 'There must be a lot of them there.'

'I trapped him.'

'Not necessary to indicate method of destruction.'

It was lucky for Wee Bandy that this was so, for, had the Sergeant bothered to examine

## CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

the animal, he would easily have seen the pellet-marks of gunshot on the forelegs.

'When was he killed?' continued the Sergeant.

'Yesterday, sir.'

'Very good. What class of animal?'

'A fox, sir.'

'Don't I know that!'

'Well, he's not a silver one!'

'Don't try to be facetious. Is it a dog-fox, a vixen, or a cub?'

'Oh, beg pardon, Sergeant. I didn't know what you meant. He's a dog-fox, sir. A rale ould chiseler.'

'I must see whether he is or not. Better take him out of the sack.'

This elaborate ritual began to tell on Wee Bandy's nerves. They were never very steady, and already his hands had wrung his cap into a long spiral. As he bent his red head over the sack and began, fumblingly, to untie the string, he wished in his heart and soul that he had flung the miserable carcase into some bog-hole.

'If he's a cub,' said the Sergeant, 'you'll only get half-a-crown.'

'Be the suffering duck, aren't you terrible exact!' said Wee Bandy hotly.

'Now, it doesn't interest me what class he is,' said the Sergeant, trying to control his temper, 'so long as I do my duty.'

'Well, there's no use in you making little of me beest!'

'Listen here, I don't care if he's a rhinoceros, so long as the form is filled correctly.'

'Well, there's no use in you eating the head off me, till you see him!'

'How dare you say such . . .'

'There you are. Away again!'

'Who's away again?'

'You are, Sergeant. Lepping mad, for nothing.'

'How dare you say such a thing!'

'Oh, indeed you are, Sergeant. Sure, I can see the head swelling on you!'

'The head swelling. Well, of all the cheek! Hadn't I peace and comfort working in the garden all morning until you . . .'

'You can have peace and comfort again in welcome, Sergeant, but there's no use in the pair of us starting open rebellion over the head of an old fox.'

'Take him out of that sack and don't have so much to say.'

'He's terrible heavy, Sergeant, but . . . here he is, anyway.'

'Oh, he's a great big lad, right enough,' said the Sergeant, and he turned his attention once more to the form on his desk. 'How much do you wish to claim?' he asked as a matter of course.

'Be the suffering duck,' fumed Wee Bandy, as he lost grip of his temper once more, 'isn't it down in black and white on the County Council notices?'

'Easy now,' warned the Sergeant ominously. 'Keep cool. These forms must be filled correctly.' Then he continued, musingly: 'Amount claimed . . . five shillings.'

'And there's as much writing as if it was a hundred pounds they were giving a body!'

'Name of claimant,' continued the Sergeant as he wrote, quite oblivious of Wee Bandy's remarks.

'Be the hokey farmer, do they want the fox's fingerprints!'

'Surname . . . in block capitals,' said the Sergeant.

'Send them his photygraph.'

'Christian name.' The Sergeant continued to write.

'And the photygraph of his uncle that was kilt in the Boer War.'

'Occupation.' The Sergeant mumbled, as if in another world.

'And the picture of the wedding-group of his ould fella.'

'Place of residence,' mused the Sergeant in deep concentration.

'Ah, they're all daft!'

'Here, Wee Bandy, can you sign your name?' inquired the Sergeant as he completed the form.

'Badly, Sergeant.'

'Well, sign here.'

Wee Bandy took the pen, and his protruded tongue wriggled in agony over his unshaven lips while he slowly produced his signature.

'You're finished now,' said the Sergeant, 'except for the coup de grâce. You don't know what that means. It's a bit of French—but have you a penknife?'

'I have indeed, Sergeant' said Wee Bandy, as thoughts of hunting chivalry brightened his weather-beaten face. 'Maybe 'tis the brush you'd like to keep? You can have the whole hide in welcome, if you want it.'

'No. I don't want either, thanks all the same. But you'll have to remove the marauder's tongue.'

'Remove what?'

'The marauder's tongue.'



## THE DEAD FOX

This crowning absurdity and unintelligible verbosity had a shattering effect on Wee Bandy's nerves. He wondered was he being fooled or was he dreaming the whole nightmarish fantasy. He stood staring speechlessly and, had the Sergeant at that moment called out something boyishly playful, such as 'Tig' or 'Cuckoo,' Wee Bandy would have let out a screech of terror and jumped through a window. 'Listen, Sergeant, either you or me must be going clean daft.'

'Oh, come on, and don't have so much talk about a simple operation.'

'Simple operation!'

'Here. Give me that knife and I'll do it in a jiffy.'

'I may have had a lying tongue all my life, but if you come next or near me, Sergeant, or interfere with me in any way, I'll defend myself to the last!'

'Lord give me patience with you! Here, I say, take this knife and remove his tongue yourself.'

'His tongue?'

'His tongue, of course! What's the matter with you?'

'Wait, Sergeant, me jewel, till I recover my wits.'

'Oh, you're as bad as the rest of them. Sure, the whole procedure was given in the paper last week. But I suppose you never read the newspapers. According to regulations, you must remove the tongue in my presence before

I sign the form; otherwise, you could bring that fox to every Barracks in the county and collect the bounty.'

'Oh, that puts a teetotally differential complexion on the matter,' said Wee Bandy understandingly. He lifted the fox's head to comply with the regulations, and then his own complexion underwent an awful metamorphosis.

The Sergeant turned his attention to his filing-cabinet and said casually: 'They say a fox's tongue is a great thing for drawing thorns from your fingers. I never tried it myself, but, if I *do* get a prod, I'll not be short of remedies. Johnny-the-Lad left another tongue here this morning.'

FEW released prisoners ever left the Barracks so hastily. As Wee Bandy rushed blindly into the street his sack caught on a spike of the wicket-gate and the fox's brush emerged. As he fumed along towards the bog, Burntshin-Bridgeen, the most inquisitive old-maid in the village, insisted on hearing full particulars of the capture. 'Did you shoot him?'

'No,' he snapped.

'Did you kill him with dogs?'

'No,' he roared.

'Did you catch him in a trap?'

'No,' he screamed.

'And how did he die?'

From the depths of his tortured soul Wee Bandy screeched: 'Sciatica!'

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## Television

*All hail, wonder of the ages!  
Could ever marvel stir the mind  
As this has done?  
What else is left, we ask,  
Of Earth's discoveries to find?*

*Remote-control; this cathode-tube;  
Rich patterns of a world to trace.  
Fantastic? Yes.  
Yet time will surely come  
When marvellous seems commonplace.*

*Comparing now, all is as naught;  
No limit set upon our dreams.  
Man reaches out—  
The very stars themselves  
May one day twinkle on our screens.*

ALISTER JAMES.

# Heard Island

## *Australia's Antarctic Weather Station*

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EDMUND ROBERTS

IN 1947 the British Government transferred sovereignty in the Antarctic island of Heard to the Australian Government. This was interesting in several ways, not least because the most remarkable meteorological station in the British Commonwealth is to be found on Heard Island, which rises, 2500 miles south-west of Fremantle, sheer from the waste of waters that stretches between Australia and the ice-bound coasts of the Antarctic continent. Heard, discovered in 1853 by an American navigator of the name, is sometimes spoken of as the centre of the world's worst weather. Landing is hazardous and life ashore a succession of gales and rain, so it is not surprising that nobody has ever picked it as an island kingdom. Indeed, until lately only four of the many Antarctic expeditions in these waters had sent a man to tread its lava-beds. Now the Australian Government has a weather and scientific station there.

THIS ice-ribbed, rock-bound island sprawls like some gigantic sea-beast in the long green swell of the Southern Ocean. It is almost constantly swept by 60- to 70-miles-an-hour gales, or else is blanketed in fog. Inland it rises to over 9000 feet to the summit of Big Ben, an active volcano which erupted dangerously during 1950. The scored sides of the giant mountain soar upwards into the murk, while enormous glaciers plunge down its sides and those of other grim spurs, breaking off into small icebergs as they reach the bitterly cold waters of the ocean roaring in treacherous surf upon the boulder-strewn beaches.

The island is 25 miles long by 9 miles wide. Animal life, apart from vast numbers of all types of oceanic birds, including petrels,

skuas, penguins, and gulls, is confined to sea-leopards and great lubberly two- to three-ton sea-elephants, which grunt murderously when disturbed, but which otherwise take their ease upon the boulder-beds, oblivious of driving rain, ice-blizzard, and dank fog; while vegetation consists only of coarse grass, mounds of moss, and an inferior type of Kerguelen cabbage.

The Royal Australian Navy is making the relief of the scientific party from time to time an occasion for training reservists. The relief-ship carries a nucleus of permanent naval officers and men, and reservists work as members of the ship's company. Some idea of the difficulties attendant upon even a routine job like this can be gathered from what happened in August 1950 when Dr Serge Udovikoff, medical officer on Heard Island, was down with appendicitis. H.M.A.S. *Australia* arrived after an 11-day voyage, and then a gale prevented a boat from being lowered to go ashore. Gales and snowstorms delayed the cruiser, which was sent after the doctor radioed that if help was impossible he would try to operate on himself. The British freighter *Perthshire* had to abandon an attempt to reach the island on account of bad weather.

Much the same experience fell to the lot of the party on the Australian naval tank-landing craft, LST 3501, which was sent to establish the station. First sight of the island was had on 11th December 1947, when the fog lifted, and in the clear light of the Antarctic summer the snow-capped summit of Big Ben soaring above the clouds, and touched with pink from the rising sun, was visible from a distance of 15 miles. But by the time Lieutenant-Commander Dixon had butted the blunt nose of his craft nearer shore, Heard

## HEARD ISLAND

Island had resumed its normal appearance: cloud had closed in and the top of the great mountain was no longer to be seen. Although the scenery was spectacular, the whole place looked so inhospitable that it was not surprising to the members of the Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition that previously few parties had landed even temporarily.

Unprepossessing as the island looked, it had been chosen as the first in a chain of weather and scientific stations to be set up in sub-Antarctic and Antarctic waters. Guided in part by the advice of the veteran Australian Antarctic explorer Sir Douglas Mawson, the committee responsible is of the opinion that more fruitful results will come of systematic investigations by semi-permanent and permanent stations than from more spectacular exploratory dashes.

**L**IEUTENANT-COMMANDER DIXON first sounded his way cautiously into Spit Bay and anchored a mile off Fairchild Beach in 15 fathoms. It had been hoped that this spot might offer a practical landing-place, but the tongue of a glacier could be seen dropping steeply to the beach, where the surf ran high. So the LST moved slowly northwards, using the echo-sounding apparatus. The scenery was still spectacular. The ribbed sides of Big Ben rose steeply; great masses of black rock formed noble headlands; and in the soft light the gently-sliding glaciers showed a changing pattern of green and lilac shadows. A landing was made at Atlas Cove, on the north-western side by Cape Laurens, a 2000-foot cliff of black rock, and on the eastern side by a low headland terminating in a 600-foot rock-pinnacle called Roger's Head. The landing-place was a boulder-strewn black-soil plain covered with hummocks of grass.

The first scientists to land made their initial objective the emergency hut erected in 1927 under British Admiralty instructions for the relief of distressed mariners. There are bunks, blankets, tinned foods, barrels of preserved meat, and biscuits, matches and a coal-stove—enough to last a shipwrecked crew for some months. The hut showed no signs of recent occupation and the foodstuffs cached were in very good condition, except that some of the tins were corroded.

After reconnaissance it was decided that Atlas Cove was the only hope as a landing-

place. An R.A.A.F. Walrus reconnaissance plane was put afloat and she made a two-and-a-half-hour flight. This was her first and last trip, for a week later a terrific gale smashed her up. It was two days before wind and tide were considered favourable enough to attempt landing stores. In the meantime Heard Island showed the type of weather it could brew. The wind whipped down in sudden fierce squalls off the mountain and over the edge of the cliffs. Seas rose to mountainous height with scarcely any warning, and Lieutenant-Commander Dixon once had to put out to sea hastily to ride out a gale, and the boats, crews, and some of the scientists were marooned ashore.

After the storm subsided, during the next seven days the LST was beached for a total of 22 hours, during which sailors and scientists slaved together, often waist-deep in ice water. Several times disaster was missed by a hair's breadth, and once the LST cleared the beach just in time to escape a fierce north-west squall of snow and sleet which whipped in without warning. Late one afternoon the ship's radio called in all working-parties because the barometer was falling rapidly. The wind was rising and the LST headed for the shelter of Cape Laurens.

Mr Stuart Campbell, leader of the expedition, recorded: 'The weather gave us its first real indication of what the scientists could expect in their winter quarters. . . . The wind raced down at 120 m.p.h. The waters of the cove lashed up into fountains of angry water. The LST disappeared into the scud. We piled up heaps of stones on the bottom of our tents, built break-winds of cases round them, and then stayed inside and hoped the canvas would stand the terrific wind-pressure. The Walrus, parked on the beach, was turned inside out. None of us had ever seen anything like it before. At five o'clock that afternoon I contacted LST by RT. Commander Dixon said it was the worst storm he had ever experienced, and he had been at sea since sailing-ship days. Gotley, the meteorologist, who had stayed aboard to study the storm, exulted in the fact that the needle had run off the barograph after recording a record low of 27.85 inches.'

**A**S has been indicated, the most conspicuous feature on the island is Big Ben. The chief peaks on the mountain are: Mawson

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Peak (9005 ft), Stuart Campbell Peak (7923 ft), the Dome (7900 ft), and Fremantle Peak (7800 ft). There are two smaller peaks on the approaches to the main mountain-mass—Little Matterhorn (4856 ft) and Mount Separation (4850 ft). According to members of a British expedition that visited the island about 1870, the name Big Ben was first used by crews of sealers then numerous in Antarctic waters. The volcano was not reported active at that time, and the first occasion when it was seen in eruption was in 1910, when the British ship *Wakefield* reported a violent outburst.

Up to the present, Big Ben has not been climbed, although during the past few years several attempts have been made, but they have had to be abandoned about halfway. The only other known attempt at scaling the peak was in 1929, by a French geologist, Aubert de la Rue. His wife, the only woman to have landed on Heard Island, was with him. Although Big Ben is not high compared with many volcanoes, weather conditions make any attempted ascent extremely difficult, not to say hazardous. The peak is permanently covered with ice and snow, and its flanks are seared by deeply-crevassed glaciers. The summit is almost continually shrouded in swirling mist, and except for about twenty days a year gales and blizzards render climbing impossible.

However, Australian scientists are on Heard Island for meteorological purposes mainly, not mountain-climbing. Meteorology in the Commonwealth is handicapped by the fact that Australia is an island continent surrounded, except on the north, by great

stretches of ocean. The station on Heard Island has been established as one of the moves to overcome the problem of obtaining accurate reports from these waters.

Before the Second World War the Commonwealth Meteorological Service started a system of weather-reports from ships in neighbouring waters, but this had to be abandoned after 1939 for security reasons. Since the war the service has begun again, and numbers of ships have been equipped with instruments for recording. They range from coastal vessels to large liners. Reports are radioed in international code over 6 hours, and they give barometer readings, air temperature, visibility, wind direction and speed, type and height of cloud, and prevailing weather.

The general west-east movement of atmospheric conditions is disturbed by cold air moving up from the Antarctic. The regular three-hourly reports from Heard Island and from Macquarie Island, about 850 miles south-east of Tasmania, provide invaluable data on atmospheric conditions over the vast expanses of the Southern Ocean and have increased the meteorologists' knowledge of the weather processes affecting the southern part of the continent. Heard Island keeps in close radio contact with the South African station lying to the west. After a sufficiently long period of observation by these sub-Antarctic stations, and with the information provided by ships, it is hoped that the meteorologists will be able to draw up charts of the circulation of the weather of the whole Southern Hemisphere.

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## Fog

*Denseness of murky grey and bleeding lamp,  
Stinging the eye and muffling the raucous foot,  
Sooting the nostril with the stench of earth,  
Tingling the throat with taste of the coffin's breath.*

*Chugging of tortoise cars with feeble shape,  
Looming a century past in lamp-led pace,  
Echoless swirls of mist inwall the sky,  
Draining all sense and reality from the world.*

*Hunchback fog, destroyer of death and life,  
Engendering muteness of voice to loved ones' lips,  
Cleaving a city to chaos with your breath,  
You are the victor, we but the puppets squirm.*

W. McDERMOTT.



# The Navy's Rum

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## QUARTER-DECK

FROM time to time you read in your newspaper or hear in the News Bulletin over the radio that an Admiralty order has been issued to the Fleet to 'splice the mainbrace.' This order is invariably given to honour some signal occasion, such as a visit by the Queen to her Fleet, or in recognition of some resounding naval deed, such as the escape the other year of the *Amethyst*.

Someone will ask: 'What does it mean?' and to this another will vaguely reply: 'Oh, it means they will get another tot of rum.' Well, that answer would be quite right. But beyond that point a great many people have little or no knowledge of what a navy issue of a tot of rum implies. What they know is that if they go into a hotel and ask for a 'small rum' it is pretty dear and there is not much of it.

A tot of rum in the navy is one-eighth of a pint. Now that may not seem a very big drink to a thirsty sailor, especially if he is on a ship at sea and he is unable to get any other kind of alcoholic liquor. But there is more to the matter than that. The issuing strength of navy rum is about 2.5 degrees under proof. This strength was fixed as long ago as 1866. When you remember that the rum generally sold to the public is 30 degrees under proof—and most people will even add a little water to that—it gives you some idea of the potency of the navy rum.

The spirit used by the navy is bought on the open market upon samples submitted and tested. In normal times it is a blend of West Indian—in the main, Demerara and Trinidad—with proportions of Natal and Mauritius rums. In times of war, supplies of rum, and other items, have of necessity to be drawn from sources other than Admiralty dockyards or supply bases. Consequently, other types of rum are issued, and I can recall when on service in the Pacific during the Second World

War that rum drawn from Australian Admiralty dockyards seemed to be very much more fiery and peppery than the regular navy rum in use.

I mentioned that navy rum is about 2.5 degrees under proof. You may well ask: 'What is proof?' Proof spirit is a mixture of 49.24 per cent alcohol and 50.76 per cent water by weight. The term 'proof' arose from the following test formerly employed by the Customs. Gunpowder was moistened with the spirit about to be tested and the alcohol was then ignited. If it fired the powder, the spirit was considered to be proof, but if the spirit just burnt off and left a soggy mass, then it was considered under proof. In these days of scientific testing devices the old method of testing appears very crude.

Pure rum is colourless. The navy rum is a dark brown, but this is only brought about by the use of colouring caramel (burnt sugar) in the spirit. The depth of the colour of rum is no criterion as to quality.

The rum is made up for the Admiralty in the following sizes: small cask—9 gallons; kilderkin—18 gallons; half hogshead—27 gallons; barrel—36 gallons. To very small ships, such as minesweepers, the rum is issued in 1-gallon stone jars, which are protected by a wicker basket closely fitting to and modelled round the jar—a very necessary precaution.

It is interesting to note that when strong rum and water are added together a contraction in volume takes place and there is a temporary rise in the temperature of the mixture due to chemical reaction between the water and the rum. A pint of water and a pint of rum added together will not produce a quart. When equal quantities of water and rum are mixed together the loss in volume of liquid is almost 4 per cent.

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I STATED that the rum ration was one-eighth of a pint per day. All ratings, except patients and staff in a naval hospital either ashore or afloat, can express a wish to have their tot of rum provided they are over twenty years of age. How the boys count the days to their twentieth birthday! Officers are not entitled to the rum ration save in special circumstances—namely, when they are away on duty from their own ship and wine-store, or when the order is given to splice the mainbrace. Even in the latter case it was seldom in my experience that an officer drew a tot of rum. He might more likely treat himself in the wardroom to an extra drink, customs-free and very cheap compared with civilian prices.

Chief petty officers and petty officers are issued with neat spirit—the same amount, one-eighth of a pint—and they can add their own water if they wish. Very few do. In the chief petty officers' and petty officers' messes you sometimes get arguments whether it is better to sip the tot and make it last, or to have one good swig 'down the hatch.' The supporters of the second school of thought are very much in the majority.

The ordinary sailors, or Marines where they are carried on a ship, eligible to draw a rum ration should be issued, according to Admiralty instructions, with one part rum and two parts water, making three-eighths of a pint in all. This is called grog. I have known of cases on destroyers and smaller ships where the issue has been one part of rum with one part of water.

The tot is supposed to be drunk at the time of issue. It is common practice, nevertheless, for some ratings to drink only part of their tot and save the remainder in a bottle. When they get a bottleful, and it is a half-day off work at the week-end, then they have a beano, afterwards getting their heads down and sleeping off the effects.

There are heavy penalties, however, for the sailor caught with a bottle of grog in his mess locker, whether it is his own or 'he is minding it for someone else'—a frequent excuse put forward when the delinquent is discovered. There are equally heavy penalties if a sailor intoxicates himself while on duty or in duty hours as a result of drinking an accumulated amount of his daily tot. Such penalties are only right and proper as the rating might be unfit when he is urgently needed.

A rating over twenty years of age who does not elect to take his tot of rum is credited in his pay with 3d. a day in lieu. He draws this allowance quarterly.

THE issue of rum is generally made at 12 noon, but the time can be altered at the captain's discretion, or the issue may even not be made at all on a particular day if the captain deems it wise in the circumstances. I can remember the day when the *Scharnhorst* was sunk. I was on the *Duke of York* then and we were at action stations all day. After the battle and the sinking of the enemy battleship, the men were consoling themselves that at any rate they had their tot of rum to come. However, because of the possibility of reprisal raids from enemy ships and aircraft, and the necessity, therefore, for everyone to be on the alert, the captain ordered that the rum ration be not issued. You can imagine the grumbling that order provoked, but the lads grudgingly admitted afterwards that it was right. They didn't lose that tot, as some days later when the *Duke of York* returned to Scapa Flow a double ration was issued, one tot at 12 noon and one at 5 p.m.

A captain can, of course, sanction a special issue of rum, extra to the tot—say, to ratings on lookout duties in very cold waters. Still, it would have to be cold. Or again, I recollect a special issue was made to some prisoners of war of ours whom we recovered from enemy hands. But that's another story.

One way or another, rum causes a lot of trouble in the navy, yet I believe it is unlikely ever to be dispensed with. It is an impossibility for a ship, even a battleship, to carry enough bottled beer for everyone on board who would like to drink it—not even if it was rationed out at one bottle per man per day. The storage space for the quantity required is just not available for such an item. It is only because the navy rum is so highly concentrated in strength and therefore requires less bulk that this alcoholic drink is carried on board. And there is another reason for retention. Within limits, an officer can have a drink in his wardroom at any time, but you must remember that the tot of rum is the only alcoholic drink which the rating gets when the ship is at sea. If the ratings' tot of rum were stopped, it would also, I think, almost be necessary, in all fairness, to stop the officers having their own wine-store.



## *Come On Over, John*

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ANNE SHERMAN

**M**Y name's Burgoyne Willis. I live in Passaic, New Jersey, and I'm in the third grade at St Delmenco's School. Our teacher is Miss Murrell. She's O.K. I guess she's about right, though she comes from some place out West.

I seen her on the street one evening, an' I'd been playing on a blank lot on 64th and got plenty dirty. But she didn't pass by like she ain't seen me. No, she says: 'Hallo, Bur, make any runs?' That ought to tell you she's swell. Called me Bur, too, same as the fellers in our gang; though in class she always calls me Burgoyne, which is right, I guess, 'cause she has her job to do.

Well, I suppose it was something she says one day in class about the greatest river in the world being the Amazon. She says that this river is the greatest one in all the world, and writes its name on the board.

Then Butch Emory pipes up: 'Bigger'n the Passaic, Miss Murrell?'

Miss Murrell says: 'Much bigger than the Passaic, Ethan; it's the biggest river in the world.'

Well, in the break we get to arguing. Butch says his father used to work on a boat on the Hudson, and he said it was the biggest goddam river in the whole wide world, and

now this schoolmarm from out West as good as calls his old man a liar.

One kid says: 'G'wan, they don't have schoolteachers as dumb as your old man. Of course Miss Murrell's right. I bet she's got it in the book, and we can look it up on the map of the world.'

Butch gets this kid by the arm and says: 'Don't you say my old man's dumb. If my old man says the Hudson is the biggest river in the world, I reckon he knows. He was on a boat in it. What boat was Miss Murrell on, do you reckon?'

I say: 'Is the Hudson bigger'n the Passaic?'

Then they all turn on me and say together: 'Course it is. It's as wide as hell. Anyone knows that the Passaic ain't much more than a stream.'

'How about the Hackensack?' I say. 'Is that bigger'n the Passaic, or what?' Then they take sides. Some says the Hackensack is wider and longer, but there's two guys says the Passaic is bigger'n both the Hudson and the Hackensack. Before we get to fighting, the bell rings and we go back into class, and now it's arithmetic, and we don't get no more about rivers.

But I get to thinking, and I am puzzled. I reckon Miss Murrell is bound to be right,

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but these other kids is arguing about something else that should be proved easy enough. Well, I ask my old man. I say: 'Which river is the biggest, the Passaic, the Hudson, or the Hackensack?'

He says: 'What is this? Quiz night on the radio—or you got a ten-dollar bet on with Winchell, or somethin'?'

'I just want to know,' I say.

My old man scratches his head and says: 'The Hudson 'll be the biggest for sure. Anyone knows that.'

'Bigger'n the Amazon?' I asks.

He looks at me and laughs: 'Don't go confusin' me bringin' in them foreign rivers. Just now it was the Hackensack and the Saddle River.'

'You got it wrong,' I says. 'I never said nothin' about the Saddle River. Anyone knows that's smaller than the Passaic, 'cause it runs into it.'

'Son,' he says, 'perhaps the best way would be fer you to measure 'em, then maybe I should get a little peace after workin' all day. And don't go askin' y'our Mom, 'cause she'll only come and ask me.'

Well, I knew right away that my old man had something there. I would go and measure 'em and that'd settle it good.

SO Friday night I empty my satchel and get ready to see. I got up early on Saturday and don't make no noise. I get my own breakfast and wash out an old tomato-sauce bottle and fill it with milk. Then I cut some bread slices and some salami and wrap 'em up and put 'em in the satchel with the milk. I take some paper and a pencil, because, like any of the old explorers, you always want notes.

Then I leave a note for my Mom. It says: 'I'm out for the day on business.' I take my scout compass in my pocket and I wear boots. I figure it's quite a way to the Hudson.

When I get out of the house I am surprised how quiet it is. There are some men sweeping one of the roads and the sun is low down. There's not much traffic about, so I reckon I must be very early.

First of all I march and whistle, but the satchel is on my right shoulder and it bumps me pretty often, so I put it so it hangs on my back high up. This seems better, but I soon get tired of whistling. With my compass I note I am going roughly east. Then I put it away and look at some of the shops that are

just getting ready to open, until I reckon it is holding me back, and I would do better to look at shops on the way home.

When I get to the Passaic River bridge there ain't many people about, so I measure how wide it is by walking across the bridge heel to toe all the time and counting the steps. Then I sit down and make a note of the distance. Time I done this there is more people about, guys hurrying after buses and a few news-stands open. I got two dimes in my pocket and I rattle them together as I walk. Soon the sun is right up and it gets kinda warm, so I keep to the shady side of the street I'm on.

I keep thinking: The Passaic's quite a big river. If the Hackensack's even bigger, that'll be worth seeing, never mind the Hudson. Soon I run into some boys going towards some park to play baseball. They are a bit bigger'n me, but one of 'em with a freckly face and two teeth missing in front says: 'Hey, can you pitch? You wanna game wit' us?'

I say: 'I'm sorry. I guess I'm on a kinda expedition, see. I'm goin' to walk to the Hudson.'

This feller turns round to his gang and says: 'Hey, looka Christopher Columbus here—he don't know the Hudson's about forty mile away.'

One kid says: 'He ain't got no tent. Where do you reckon he's sleepin' to-night—and the next night?'

'See here, fellers,' I say, 'I'd like to pitch for you, but I'm goin' to see my aunt at New Carlstadt.'

One of these boys says: 'You better turn right soon or you'll miss the place. So long, Columbus.'

The others say: 'So long, Columbus' out loud and all the people in the street laugh out loud. I laugh, too.

WHEN they have gone, I look for a policeman. Soon I see one talking to a man with a pushcart and I go up and wait. The man thinks I want to buy fruit and says: 'Yes, son?'

I say: 'Excuse me, I want to ask the officer somethin'.'

'O.K.,' says the cop. 'What is it, son?'

'Just how far is it to the Hudson River, please?'

'H'm,' he says, 'not more'n six miles, I guess.'



## COME ON OVER, JOHN

'Thank you, sir,' I say, and I get back to walking along, and the policeman gets back to talking with the pushcart man.

I reckon after about an hour I came to a park with some seats. It's crowded with kids, seeing it's Saturday, but I sit on a bench and drink some of my milk. I have a look at my compass here, and there's a girl about my own age on the bench who says: 'What's that thing?'

I reply: 'It's a compass.'

'What's it for?'

'It tells you where you're goin',' I explain to her.

'Why—don't you know?'

'Sorry, I got to go.' Then I get up and walk on.

Now there is only half-a-bottle of milk, it slops up and down in the bottle inside the satchel and makes a little noise. The houses out there seem a bit different. This must have been what they call 'country' some time back and they haven't rebuilt much. I walk on and on, and once I find myself going too much towards the south, so I turn north-east for a time and soon I see another river.

When I get right up to it I can see it's a lot smaller than the Passaic. I walk to the nearest bridge and sit down to look at the water. When I have rested up a bit, I pace it out heel and toe across the bridge. Then I get my paper and pencil and note that the Hackensack is only half the width of the Passaic.

As it is hot now, I drink the rest of the milk and I am going to throw the bottle into a trash-bin when I think that I'll take it all the way to the Hudson and put a message inside it before I pitch it into the water. I start on the salami sandwiches now, but I eat as I am walking.

I still head east, and there's plenty traffic on the roads. I walk and walk and I can't see any sign of a river. After a while I see an old man smoking a pipe outside a store and I ask him: 'Please, can you tell me if I am goin' the right way for the Hudson River?'

'Yes, son,' he says. 'Keep straight on here. You'll come on the river 'bout another two mile, round about Fairview. Where you walked from—Woodbridge?'

I said: 'No, I came from Passaic.'

'Gee whizz,' he says, 'that's a tidy walk fer a boy. Reckon you must have pioneerin' blood ter walk that far. Seems most people ride nowadays. Here, have a peppermint-drop.'

I SET off again, and after I had come up a long hill and down a slope I saw the Hudson. I stood still when I first saw it. It was enormous. I began to think of what Butch Emory's father had said: 'The biggest goddam river in the world.' Maybe he was right. Maybe it was bigger'n the Amazon. Maybe Miss Murrell was wrong after all. I walked down to the river bank—the far bank seemed miles away.

Where I was, there was only one other person—a woman. Pretty old, I guess. About thirty, I should say, with red hair. She's gazing out at the river and don't notice me for some time. There's boats on this great river—real big ships, with funnels, and smoking like anything. Then down swoops a big bird like I've never seen before. It's got a white body and grey wings, and it lets out a screech as it passes me. I jump back a bit, 'cause this is something new. I'm sorry I look scared, but this woman says: 'I bet he surprised you. Only a seagull, you know. Give him a bit of bread.'

Something foreign about the way she talked. I guessed maybe she'd be English. So I hauled out a bit of the salami and pitched it down on the bank. Then two of these birds came swooping down together and one gets the salami and the other fights him for it. 'Gee,' I say, 'they really are birds, so clean an' lively an' big, an' they ain't afraid of us.'

The woman says: 'Where I used to live, there were thousands of them. They came flying over the river-bridges and we threw them bread.'

I say: 'You lived on a foreign river—the Amazon, maybe?'

She answered: 'No, I lived near the Thames in England. What makes you so interested in the Amazon?'

'Miss Murrell—she's our teacher—says the Amazon is the biggest river in the world, and one of the kids says that his father said the Hudson is the biggest river in the world.'

This woman laughs, and I begin to like her, see, in spite of her funny way of speaking. She says at once: 'Miss Murrell is right. The Amazon is the biggest river in the world, much bigger than the Hudson—and there's a lot of other rivers bigger than the Hudson, too.'

'O.K.,' I say. 'I reckon Butch's old man don't know so much, even if he was on a boat

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on the Hudson. My name's Burgoyne Willis. I'm from Passaic. The gang call me Bur for short.'

The woman says: 'My name is Bronwen Williams. I'm from England, though my first name is Welsh.'

'Oh, that's O.K.,' I say, 'my first name is after some English General who got beat by the Americans, but I guess he fought hard.'

'Tell you something,' she says. 'This river was named for an Englishman, too—Henry Hudson.'

'Well, what do you know?' I say. 'All the day I bin learnin'. Now I reckon to send a message in a bottle, if you want to put one in, too, it's O.K.'

So I gave her a piece of paper and the pencil and she writes her piece and signs her name. Then I write carefully: 'This bottle is put into the Hudson River by Burgoyne Willis, age ten years, of Passaic, New Jersey. This is the biggest river I have seen so far. Anyone finding this bottle can write to me at St Delmenco's School.'

Then she says: 'Do you want to read my message?'

I say: 'O.K.,' and when I unfold it, it reads: 'Dear John, Come on over, Bronwen.' I say: 'Maybe there's a lot of Johns where you come from. Supposin' it gets to the wrong one—or don't get delivered at all. You ain't put no address, and there ain't no tellin' where this bottle might get drifted to.'

She smiled and said: 'That's all right. It's the message that matters—not the address.'

So I put both the messages in the sauce bottle and screwed on the cap tight. Then I hand it to her. 'Go on,' I say, 'you throw it in.'

She took the bottle and gave it an under-arm throw right out in the river, and it went floating down towards the sea. Then we sat on a bench and she tells me a lot about England and how she was a nurse and in the war an' everything how she was on a ship that got torpedoed and how after the war she don't want to stop travelling, so she takes a job in America, where she is homesick—I guess for this John feller as much as anything.

I ask: 'Does this John write to you?'

'Oh, yes,' she says, bringing out a stack of letters from her bag. 'That's all he does. I wish he'd come out here, though.'

Well, I'm pretty good at remembering, and as these letters is all air-mail and the

sender's name is on the back, I reads it twice and that's that. I don't forget it.

Then I tell her about my Mom and the gang and everybody, and how if I make out good at school I'm to have a pair of skates. This all takes time, and after a bit we go and have a soda and some cake in a drug-store, which she pays for, and I remember my manners and afterwards I buy her another soda. Then we shake hands and I start back glancing at the compass sometimes, but mostly remembering the way I had come. After a while I stopped walking and wrote down the sender's address I had seen on the letters. I didn't know at the time what I wanted it for, except that it was foreign and I wanted to remember it.

**T**HEN I walked on, and the journey back seemed longer than the way out. After a while my left foot got a bit sore, and when I took my boot off there was a blister on my foot as big as a button. I pricked it with a pin I had in my coat and walked on. Plenty of cars passed my way, but I never worried. I reckoned I should walk on an expedition.

Time I got to the outside of Passaic I was pretty tired and my feet hurt bad. The traffic was thinning out and I was mighty glad I could rest up next day. When I came in, my Mom hugged me and said: 'Bur, where you bin all day? We were worried about you. Out on business, a boy ten years old. Where did you go?'

I said: 'I'm tired, Mom. I been to the Hudson River and the Hackensack and I met an Englishwoman, and I saw birds as big as this, and I sent a message in a bottle, and I walked all the way, and . . .' I guess I fell asleep then in a chair, but next morning I was rested and I went out to behind Jacobs furniture-store and met the gang. Bull Jarvis said: 'What d'you mean by not turning up yesterday for the game? You know you was picked to pitch?'

I said: 'I'm very sorry, but I went for a walk to the Hudson River and I measured the Hackensack and the Passaic. The Passaic's twice as wide as the Hackensack, and the Hudson's bigger'n twenty Passaics.'

Butch was there and he said: 'There y'are, like my old man said. The Hudson's the biggest goddam river in the world.'

I looked him in the eye and I said: 'Your old man is nuts. The biggest river in the

## BLOW, BUGLE, BLOW!

world is the Amazon, like Miss Murrell says.'

'An' who says so?' asks Butch.

'A friend of mine, a woman from England, named Bronwen Williams, that's who—and she knows—and she was in the war and in a ship that was torpedoed, and she knows about all the rivers—and she used to live on the Thames, which is an English river—and she said the man who discovered the Hudson was an Englishman, named Henry Hudson, and I guess she knows just what.'

'How do we know you went over to the Hudson?' asks young Pee-wee Davis.

Then I showed them the blister on my foot, and I reckon that did it. Before long they were all asking me about the rivers, and I told them all I knew.

Then it struck me what I wanted that address for. That afternoon I got another empty bottle and I put a message in it, with the address on it clearly written. I wrote: 'Come on over, John dear, Bronwen.' Then I dropped this bottle into the Passaic River

from the middle of the bridge and went away home.

THAT was about a year ago, but this morning I got a letter from Jersey City. It came to me through school, addressed Burgoyne Willis, St Delmenco's School, and there was a five-dollar bill inside. The letter read: 'Buy yourself a new bow and arrow, John and Bronwen.' I'll have to ask my Mom what this crack about the bow and arrow means, but it looks like one bottle or the other got somewhere or something.

This morning, too, Miss Murrell said: 'The combined length of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers is four thousand five hundred and two miles.' That was all right. I knew that the Amazon was the biggest river in the world, and it's four thousand miles long. When I remember the Hudson, I think that that Amazon must surely be something. Maybe I'll take a trip there some day.

## Blow, Bugle, Blow!

### *Soldiering Memories*

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G. RIDSDILL SMITH

I SWITCHED on the wireless the other night and was all but moved to instinctive action by the notes of a shrill bugle-call—'Fall in A, fall in B, fall in all the company'—followed by that familiar shuffling of feet and rattle of rifles and the rough 'Get fell in there' of the N.C.O.

Who were they, those men falling in? The question raised memories of the many men I had formed up with in the ranks, or watched falling in under sergeant-majors through a quarter of a century of amateur soldiering—memories that crowded the few seconds before I realised I had tuned in to 'The

Brushwood Boy,' with Cottar marching his men back to cantonments.

But that bugle had called me right back to school-days—and bugles, painfully out of tune, blown by buglers skulking down by the sea or along the sea-wall, or in any spot where they could practise in peace, yet blending in memory with the ceaseless sound of the waves, and sunsets over the Irish Sea; to route-marches behind the O.T.C. band (under the school Sergeant-major, once a drummer-boy on Roberts's march to Kandahar), whose stridor shattered the peace of the Fylde towns and villages, drawing heads to windows and

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crowds to street-corners to see 't'lads' of the Red Rose swaggering by; to field-days with other schools on the Lancashire fells, terminated by the usual three cheers for the enemy—except on one unusual occasion when our C.O.'s horse bolted with him as he rose in his stirrups, hat in hand, to give us a lead; to O.T.C. camps where the school on guard each night was hypercritically judged by the way its bugler blew last post, especially that last haunting phrase—'Come home, home!'—that dies away on the night.

It seems to me now that bugles blew all day long in those camps and the only time you really liked hearing them was when you were well out of the way, perhaps lying in the shade on some near-by hill listening to the calls from camps on the tented plain below, watching the smoke of the cookers curling up in the evening light, and wondering what units were there and which of your friends were with them. Oh, those shivering reveilles, and the subsequent calls, now obsolescent, due to Tannoy and loud-speaker—cookhouse, post, fall-in, officers, and that fussy series of orderly corporal, orderly sergeant (subtly distinguished by a complementary C at the end)—that followed the clock round to sunset retreat, last post, and lights out, whose sleepy notes brought the dowsing of lanterns, till the tents, cones of light, became cones of white, and silence reigned in the lines.

**B**UT I never appreciated the true art of bugling till I became Band President for a short time in the War, nor the problems a bandmaster has to face. I still have a letter from the father of one of the bandboys, a brilliant bugler, who was always in trouble. 'Of course, he never complains,' ran the letter, 'but I gather he can't get on with the Bandmaster. On one occasion the Bandmaster threatened to bang his head on the wall. Surely, Sir, this sort of thing should not be necessary?' Surely not, yet the bandmaster is sometimes sore pressed, and at this particular depot was literally pressed, on guest-nights, into a seat at table beside the C.O. to take a glass of port while his band played a light number or two to the baton of the corporal—a double embarrassment for him, I always thought.

There were some fine buglers in that regiment and the calls they blew echoed from barrack-walls and -square with brazen

urgency. Last post, blown under the arch of the great gate, was something to remember, something that seemed to call up the ghosts of the men who had won for the regiment battle-honours that went back to the wars of William III and Marlborough. The only call I never heard was the alarm, due to be sounded when the orderly-officer on all-night duty on the battlemented tower shouted down to the orderly-bugler in the guardroom below. When the emergency did arise it was too late to do anything, for the land-mine, floating serenely down, had blown all the windows and doors in and all the allotments up. A trick of wind, a split-second's error in release saved countless lives that night—including my own, which, in my Pooh-Bah capacity at the time, would have rendered seven appointments vacant. A torn fragment of the ice-blue silk parachute of the mine still recalls that night, and I see myself, and a fellow-officer under close arrest whom I was guarding, sitting before his fire, he in dressing-gown and pyjamas of blue silk, just like the parachute—a snug scene, touchingly comic in memory, that went rocketing into the night with the married allotments. No use sounding the alarm after that!

**B**UGLE-CALLS, that make the heart leap, can also make it ache, and those calls the Shropshire Lad heard, faint and forlorn, came, I think, from his youth in that Land of Lost Content; while for Rupert Brooke, still in his youth, they rang with a glory we who were young then all heard, a glory the poet put into his 'Blow out, you bugles,' and the Prince of Wales into the sentence 'My generation had a rendezvous with history.' Now for us once more, after another war, they echo again, those bugles that blew on land and sea all over the world, above the din of battle, on still grey dawns, over quiet graves, till the air must pulse with their five dancing notes. If ever composer stirred in his grave, surely Handel did. A harsh instrument the bugle may be, and cruel on lips and teeth, but bold and bonny with its coloured tassels and bright curves winking in the sun. No wonder the bugler with bugle at his lips is symbolic of action and high adventure.

As for me, I could get no more out of it than the mounted boy-bugler who fell off his horse one field-day and so flattened his bugle that, when ordered to blow the cease fire, he could produce nothing but mud and water.



## Twice-Told Tales

### XXXV.—The Italian's Theatre

[From Chambers's Edinburgh Journal of November 1853]

TO an Italian, the theatre is home, senate, forum, academy—all and everything in existence; he does not go there half so much for the sake of the performance, as to fill up four or five hours of his daily existence, to see his friends, to hear what is going forward, to look at any strange face that may attract his notice, to contemplate from his stall near the orchestra the different flirtations carried on in the boxes above and around him, and to take his own share, perchance, in the numerous little comedies of real life that are here nightly performed, while the mock-drama on the stage forms but a minor part of the interests so curiously concentrated in this building.

The husband, in all well-regulated establishments, accompanies his wife to the theatre, and remains in the box until some visitor appears, which is generally the case as soon as she has been seen to enter. He then takes his leave, and does not trouble her with his presence till the close of the evening, to escort her home; as it would be considered very insipid to be seen sitting long together, and infallibly be looked upon as the result of the lady's want of attraction, or the lack of resources on his side to fill up the time. Released from his attendance, therefore, as soon as the welcome sound is heard of the curtain at the door being drawn aside to give admission to a visitor, he hastens in his turn to commence a round of calls to those ladies especially whose houses, when the theatre is not open, he is most in the habit of frequenting. Thus the leading belles gather round them their usual *società*, and they talk and laugh, as is their wont, without much regard to the performance, except at any favourite air or duet, when, as if by magic, the whole audience is silent and breathless with attention. The loquacity prevalent is sometimes annoying to the pit and gallery, particularly in a prose piece, when

the actors are scarcely audible from the hum of patrician voices, and an angry '*Zitto, zitto!*' gives an indication of popular feeling. But even this departure from the usual orderly demeanour of the people is very rare. It would be difficult to find more decorum and correctness of deportment than they present: there is no bad language, no quarrelling, no drinking—not even any popping of ginger-beer, or fragrance of orange-peel.

The boxes are fitted up on either side with narrow sofas, on which the *società* lounge and gossip at their ease. Amongst their fair owners, the respective number of visitors is a great subject of heart-burning, it being an enviable distinction to have one's box constantly filled. As regards the toilet of the ladies, there is but little display: in winter, they are scarcely more dressed than for a walking out, many of them even retaining their bonnets; and on account of the extreme cold it is often customary to send *chauffe-pieds* to keep their feet warm during the performance. The house is dimly lighted to English eyes, accustomed to the flaring gas of our own theatres, for there is only a large chandelier from the centre, and the foot-lights; but Italians are not fond of a strong glare, and resorting thither so constantly as they do, a greater degree of brilliancy would prove fatiguing to the sight. The existing arrangement permits them to see and to be seen, and with this they are perfectly satisfied; and thus they go on, every night of the week while the season lasts—excepting Mondays, when an inferior singer takes the prima donna's place, and Fridays, when the theatre is closed—gossiping, trifling, complaining, but still led there by an irresistible impulse, a void in domestic life which, so long as English hearts and homes maintain their proud supremacy, will happily remain an unsolved mystery to us.



## Milk for a Dreamer

PAUL BRITTEN AUSTIN

THERE was once a Dreamer who lived in an attic. So busy was he dreaming, he had no time at all to go to an office; and so he had no money either.

Each day the Dreamer went down to the milkshop at the corner of the street. 'Do give me a pint of milk,' he said, holding out the can, 'and I'll tell you my dreams.'

The owner of the milkshop had a plump good-natured wife, a cheerful woman, who loved nothing better than to laugh at other people's dreams. 'Go along with you!' she would reply—but already the Dreamer was relating his dream, and there was nothing else for her to do but listen.

'I WAS nesting in a tree,' said the Dreamer, looking into the Woman's laughing eyes, 'when a crow came flying by.'

"What are you doing in my tree?" croaked the bird, flapping his black wings at me. "Don't you know Humans aren't allowed up here, only birds and insects? You are condemned to be baked in a pie!"

'And in a trice'—here the Dreamer leaned over the counter and took the Woman's plump white hand in his own—'in a trice I found my self sitting in a pie. Beside me were a lot of

gooseberries and black-currants. Poor things, they couldn't imagine what it was like to be eaten, and so they were in a terrible state of fright. But I—I was strangely calm.

"My little friends," said I to the black-currants and the gooseberries, "it's as simple as pie. I have been eaten several times myself—once by a flea, another time by an elephant who mistook me for a bun. It is—once you get used to it—a delicious sensation."

'Hardly were these words out of my mouth before the pie was served up. All my eloquence went for nothing. The currants and the gooseberries were scared stiff. Their hair stood up on end, their eyes stared wildly at the Man who was now picking up his knife and fork. "Don't eat me! Oh, don't eat us!" they screamed. Their tiny voices were so faint and faraway you could hardly hear them.

"See here," quoth I, boldly stepping out of the pie and raising my hand in a gesture of protest, "surely you aren't going to eat all these innocent berries who've never done you a bad turn in their lives?"

"I most certainly am," replied the Man angrily. "Kindly step out of the way."

"Never!" I cried, planting myself firmly between his plate and the pie.

"Very well," he roared, seeing himself

## MILK FOR A DREAMER

balked of his dinner. "Then I shall eat you instead!" And sticking his fork in my midriff he swallowed me at a single gulp.

"The Man's throat was red and soft, stifling my shrieks" echoes as I glided downwards. His stomach—to what shall I liken that capacious stomach? It was a tropical ocean, dotted here and there with islands, the shape and consistency of pancakes. On these grew rubbery palms, whose branches waved airily in the scented breezes. I fell with a splash into the ocean. At once a treacherous current began to bear me swiftly downwards. If I had not always been a strong swimmer I could not have prevailed against it. At last, wet and dripping, I reached the shore of an island. Feeling thirsty, I climbed up a palm-tree, and broke off a coconut. Alas! there was no milk in it—the palm-tree was only a dream palm-tree, and the coconut nothing more than the head of a monkey who had got lost in thought. And that," said the Dreamer, with a smile, "is why you *must give me some milk*. Otherwise, I cannot go on with my dream."

The Woman looked anxiously round. Having made sure her husband was not in sight, she laughed, and, withdrawing her hand, she made the Dreamer promise to tell her what happened next, and poured a pint of foaming milk into his can.

The Dreamer returned to his attic, drank down his milk at a gulp, and went straight back to bed. "That's the worst of being a Dreamer," he mumbled, as with a yawn he drew the blanket over his head. And in no time he was fast asleep.

CLING! went the shop bell. Already the Woman had seen the Dreamer coming afar off. "To-day," she said angrily to herself, but beginning to smile even in spite of herself, "to-day I shall scold that idle fellow. Why should I fill his can day after day like this, I ask you?"

It was no good. The young fellow was already shyly pushing it across the marble slab. And she laughed. And he laughed. And the cat, who was licking up milk on the floor, laughed too.

"Well?" the Woman asked, her round eyes moist with laughter. "What then?"

The Dreamer looked sleepily round the shop, where the gleaming milk-churns stood piled high. He scratched his tousled head. Obviously he had forgotten. It was always

like this. One dream was never finished before another came and chased it away.

"But you promised," exclaimed the wife of the milkman, crossly. There was nothing she hated more than being disappointed. "You promised me. You did."

"I dreamed I was a Fork," the Dreamer was saying in his comical way, as if he, too, was every bit as amazed by what went on at nights as she, "and was lying on a table-cloth."

"A Fork!" echoed the Woman amazed. Many odd things she had heard in her day, but none odder than this. She sat down heavily on her stool. Putting her chin in her hand, and resting her plump round elbow on the counter, she gazed at the Dreamer open-mouthed.

"YES, a common iron Fork," the Dreamer repeated, "with five prongs to it. To my dismay, I found I was engaged to marry the Spoon. Spoon was lying beside me on the dinner-table. The table was all laid out for a magnificent wedding. Candles shone in the silver candlesticks. The Teaspoons had all polished their faces. The tiny Salt Spoon was to be bridesmaid, and the Knife best man.

"Who giveth this Spoon away?" asked the Pepper Pot, which was dressed up like a clergyman and looked every bit as prosperous.

"I do!" squeaked the Salt.

"Dost thou promise, O Fork, to love, honour, and comfort this Spoon till death ye do part?" asked the Pepper, in the same unctuous voice.

"I do," I replied weakly in my fork's voice.

"Then," cried the Pepper with a surreptitious glance at the Vinegar, "I pronounce dinner ready!" And at once the Gong began to sound for dinner. In came all the guests and sat themselves down at table; and soon Spoon and I were hard at work.

"Of course, there had been some mistake—she and I did not suit one another a scrap. Anyone with half an eye could have seen that. While Spoon was made of Georgian silver, I—I was only an ordinary kitchen-fork, of the sort you use to prod the potatoes with to see if they are done. We quarrelled and grumbled, Spoon and I.

"Never was a one for fine dinners," I muttered, prodding an onion.

"Whatever did you marry me for, then?" cried Spoon, as she was dipped into the soufflé.

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"I don't know. Really I couldn't tell you."

"Then we shall have to have a divorce," squeaked Spoon, bursting into tears, though she knew I didn't mean a word of it. At once the Pickles Fork, who was in love with Spoon, fell off the table and prodded one of the guests in the thigh.

"Ow!" screamed the fat guest, clapping his hand to his leg.

"Goodness gracious me!" exclaimed the hostess, to distract him. "This Fork and this Spoon don't match at all. Do let me get you another one."

"And before I could cry out, or utter a word, I was picked up and flung headlong into the kitchen sink, among all the filth and leavings of the kitchen. And now I began to cry and weep bitterly: "Dearest Spoon," I sobbed, remembering now clearly how I had loved her and gone into the dining-room to ask her to marry me. "Dearest, my own sweet Spoon, I didn't mean a word of it, not a word, really and truly I didn't. You know what a bad memory I have, and how everything slips through my fingers. Forgive me, dear Spoon."

'But the sobs of the Spoon, whom I'd so cruelly deserted, were drowned by the coarse laughter and drunken guffaws of the guests—not to mention the screams of the man who was trying to pull the Pickles Fork out of his leg, and the profuse apologies of the hostess.

'A long while I lay there in deep despair and indescribable filth, all the leavings of the kitchen.

"Serves you right," exclaimed a little prim voice. It was a wise little Jug, who was lying on the washing-up rack. "You see, you've lost her for good now."

'The Jug, I knew, was the wisest of all the pots and pans and could help me to get Spoon back, if only he would try. "Help me, help me to get her back," I implored, clasping all my prongs.

'The Jug looked down his spout at me. Then he said, in a voice in which I thought I could also detect a certain trace of bitterness: "As it happens, I am thirsty. I wasn't invited to dinner this evening, and I am decidedly peeved at the oversight. But if you can get me some milk . . ."

"Milk!" I cried, and at once I was wide-awake and the sunshine was streaming through my attic window. And so you see,' said the Dreamer, smiling once again into the Woman's candid blue eyes, 'if ever I am to see poor Spoon again . . .' and he ended his story with a sigh which wrung the poor Woman's heart.

The Woman picked up the can which the Dreamer was pushing towards her. 'I never could bear unhappy endings,' she murmured, wiping away a tear and filling the can with foaming white milk. 'I do so hope—I do hope you will find poor Spoon again, and make it up between you.'

'Maybe,' replied the Dreamer, as the shop door closed behind him and his lazy footsteps took him off down the street. 'Maybe . . .'

## Rise of the Starling

WILLIAM CLEMENTS

ALTHOUGH comparatively few people have been aware of the cold war that has been building up between man and that aggressive little bird the starling, most agriculturists and many townsmen will unhesi-

tatingly declare this bird to be more than just a mere nuisance. The starling has, we hope, reached the highest rate of reproduction, for its very numbers constitute a real source of embarrassment to more than one section of



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human society. Indeed, the problem has become so important that the Ministry of Agriculture has already given it serious consideration—so far without finding a solution.

Overbreeding appears to be the principal crime, and an instinct to keep together furnishes the complementary reason why starlings are not good companions for man. These two habits, very human though they be, are really quite serious when considered in relation to our own comfort, yet no one has so far been brave enough to advance all-out counter-measures. In the matter of a brisk birth-rate the starling is every bit as efficient as the rabbit, but rabbits, like mice, are quite evenly distributed over the earth. Starlings, however, show no inclination to disperse their forces, and they move around in squadrons. Moreover, they like the company of man. For many thousands of starlings London alone is suitable, and many develop a firm attachment to Trafalgar Square, the time-honoured resort of the pigeon.

The real trouble lies across the waters, in Russia, the Baltic States, and other European countries which are unable to support their own families of birds during the winter. Each autumn thousands upon thousands of Russian, Baltic, and other foreign starlings get together and make a mass exodus. Huge swarms settle in Scotland and England to spend the winter, and a great number also decide to winter in Ireland. This is when the fun starts—for the birds, while man chews his lips and ponders the question of rations.

The native birds of these islands are quite used to being pushed around by their starling compatriots, but when these hordes of Continental starlings drop wing on their territory a real battle is set up, and bird-lovers find it difficult to maintain their loyalties. During the winter, unfortunately, there are not enough worms to go round, and starlings settle quite happily on crops and devour them. A starling here and there is no more troublesome than any other bird, for its first choice is an insect, but in large numbers it is quickly earning the reputation hitherto reserved for the locust.

In a recent survey almost three hundred main roosts were found in Scotland, England, and Wales, and many accommodated upwards of a hundred thousand starlings. During the last few years, and particularly since the recent war, greater numbers than ever have taken to roosting in towns. Many

large and very important public buildings have been appropriated as roosts, and here the townsman has to condemn the flocks for their dirty habits and their incessant chatter, which aggravates insomnia in humans. Few starlings sleep, despite their daily sixty-mile flights in search of food. The brains of one of our most eminent electronic firms are hard at work mobilising science for a means of dispersing these chatterboxes of the night.

In the big cities of America, where the starlings have flourished even more handsomely, attempts have been made to poison them by means of sprays, so far without success. All the American starlings are the offspring of a hundred-odd imported British starlings. It was one Eugene Schieffelin of New York who decided that America should have all the birds mentioned in the works of Shakespeare, and he was obliged to include the starling, which would quite possibly have migrated there in any case. The Americans, however, have enjoyed no more success with their attempts to kill off the starling than we in these islands have had, and yet, in a sense, these birds show such a fine measure of resourcefulness that it would seem a shame to condemn them for their successful way of life.

NATURE-LOVERS deplore this bird's habits of muscling in on other birds and enjoying the fruits of the earth. But what other bird had the sense—or the boldness—to roost on the electric-light bulbs of a Boston cinema-sign during very cold weather? A full stomach alone will not absorb the thrust of nature's greatest enemy—the shafts of Arctic winds, which do occasionally make sudden expeditions.

Yes, the starling might well be envied for its virility. Watch it when it is grounded. Observe the utter negligence of its movements and note that it walks; it does not hop about with wings for ever itching to open for flight. The starling is a tough, but that in no way makes it less developed intellectually. The mocking-bird, one of the American thrushes, was long noted for its powers of mimicry, but the starling soon excelled the powers of this talented bird. Already it is known to imitate the call of at least twenty-eight birds. When the occasion warrants it, many starlings can assume the pitiful mewing of a cat in search of a saucer of warm milk. And who will now

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claim to have heard the earliest call of the cuckoo? If the starling ever decides to mimic man, poor thing, anything might happen.

American scientists, appointed by the government, quite recently looked into the feeding habits of the starling. The report stated that this bird, however much it is disliked, must be classed as beneficial. It would appear to be quite a glutton sexually. Its first brood of from five to seven youngsters is almost a past event by the time other birds feel the call, and another brood is produced a little later in the same season.

Caterpillars, spiders, beetles, grasshoppers, and other insects are consumed in enormous quantities by the young, and this was stated far to outweigh any loss to the fruit and grain crop. The Japanese beetle, which had been increasing in alarming numbers in the Eastern States and destroying large areas of valuable turf, will soon be a museum curio, for greater numbers of starlings are to be found excavating for this pest.

In Britain no comparable investigation has been carried out. The most serious charge to be made against these visitors from the Continent is that they are responsible for the regular outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease which happen to coincide with their arrival. When they depart in the spring, all outbreaks cease.

Strangely enough, the Channel Islands and Ireland, which also receive migrants, are not similarly affected. When Mr Walter Elliot was Minister of Agriculture he stated that nothing had been proved, but when Mr W. S. Morrison became the new Minister he said: 'We think this outbreak is caused by migrant birds.' Many would have accepted the outbreaks, coinciding as they did with the starlings' arrival, as evidence of guilt. Fortunately, no reliable evidence became available, despite attempts to infect starlings with the virus of foot-and-mouth disease, which left them immune.

Some farmers are on firmer ground in condemning the starling, for sheep frequently allow this bird to alight on their backs, where it removes small parasites. The farmer maintains that sheep are often struck by maggots where the droppings of the starling attract

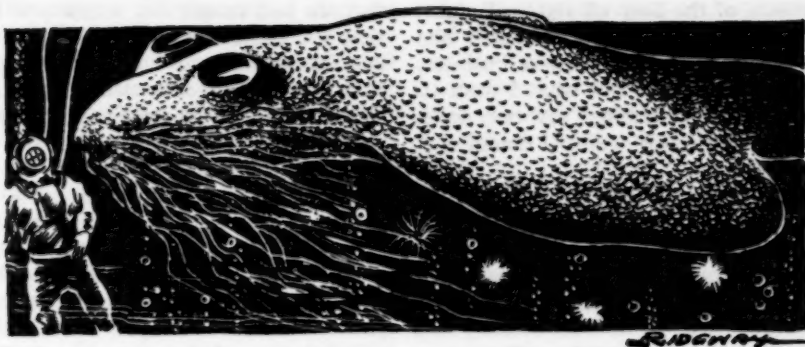
flies. Farmers are also reliable observers of the starling's habits in stealing their crops, but this bird is barefaced in everything it does.

The Russians have demonstrated to their children by practical tests employing a mechanical baby starling that the adult starling favours worms and insects for feeding its young. This experiment in nature-study might well be repeated here if only to disprove some theories that the starling prefers to feed off our own food. It is, to say the least, unfortunate that the Continental winters are so austere that these birds are obliged to desert their native homes.

THE greater number of us to-day, however, are more concerned with the sanitary arrangements of the starling than with its daylight excursions and nocturnal gossiping. The earth under every starling roost is offensive to man's eyes and nose, and, as more and more starlings come to the towns to roost, they represent a menace to social life. Public and other big buildings of every description are now in use for the starling's toilet and sleeping-quarters, and this is rapidly becoming their permanent practice. Even those people who are fond of pigeons are impatient at the starling.

Attempts to dislodge these swarms of starlings off very important places by the use of hoses, shotguns, and, more recently, supersonic sound-waves have resulted in complete stalemate. Driven from one building, the birds immediately settle on another, and so on. The town clerk of a certain large town was notified that a huge swarm of starlings had taken over a massive iron bridge as a roost, and foot-passengers could not use it after dark. He got rid of the birds by means of rockets and sulphur flares, only to find they had taken possession of the town-hall.

The starling undoubtedly makes a nuisance of itself, but many authorities feel that we should tolerate it a little longer. They point to the decline in the numbers of the English sparrow and suggest that nature will assuredly find its own level. We all know that we ourselves are but weeds alongside the cultivated atom, so let us be patient a little longer.



## Up from the Depths

FRANK STUART

THEY tell you that those who go down to the sea in ships see the wonders of the deep, and I daresay if that bit was being written again they'd put in something special about divers.

I've had fifteen years of deep-diving and I've made my little packet and I'm ready to get out. I shan't be sorry to say good-bye to my armour and my special helmets, the clamps I use for hands and the electric-lights on my shoulders. It's different now from what it was when I began. Why, I've even driven an electric undersea tractor, a twenty-tonner like a midget tank.

I've seen skeletons sitting at ships' tables twenty fathoms under, with fishes flickering in and out of their bones. And one time when I was lifting £15,000-worth of dollars from the *Camilla Irving* a dead seaman was washed up behind me by an undersea current, knocked me down, and sat on me. The ship had only been down the locker a week, and the seaman was trapped in a cabin, but the fishes had been in there, and he wasn't pretty sitting straddled across me, I can tell you.

But all that comes by way of the trade, and I've talked with British and American Navy divers who've met some worse deaders than any I've seen. Submarine salvage is where you run up against that sort of thing.

No! The yarn I want to tell you is about a fish. Quite right, my friend—a fish that got away. How big? Ah, I'm coming to that. If it was a fish, mind you.

OLD divers tell you some funny tales about troubles they've had with fish. Sharks can be pretty nasty sometimes. I should know because a lot of my work was done off Australia, and you meet them thereabouts. And so can killer-whales.

It's not so nice, when you're more than a hundred feet under, and you find yourself being inspected by a white-shark, a forty-footer or a tiger-shark. Or a killer floats, down beside you—twenty-five tons of fighting beast, able and willing to kill some other type of whale twice its own size. Or maybe a pack of killers, starving, going round looking for trouble. Or maybe you sink down beside a big nemertine. Ever heard of nemertines? They're sea-worms with colossal mouths. I've seen them upwards of twenty feet long and thicker than my body, and I've talked to divers who've come across them twice that size. The original of the sea-serpent yarn, I daresay. They're blind. But they feel things moving in the water, and open their mouths and stuff down anything they can reach.

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Yes, wonders of the deep all right, all right!

Well, you rub up against oddments like that now and then all in the way of business, if you're a deep-diver. But what I want to tell you about was something I saw only once, and never wanted to see again. I dream of it sometimes now.

We were working on the old *Corania*. You remember the Japs torpedoed her just off the Great Barrier Reef outside Australia in the war. She was carrying specie from banks on some of those Pacific islands the Japs were grabbing, and she had a valuable box of pearls aboard. They'd shadowed her all the way and finally put her down on a tongue of rock a hundred and fifty feet under. From the diving viewpoint she was a ticklish proposition because she was perched on this rock tongue like a bird on the side of a cliff. Any movement—and there's everlasting undersea currents and water-movements—and she'd roll down into one of those deep pockets that occur thereabouts, a mile deep maybe, perhaps two miles. Anyway, she was stuck just about at the limit of diving depth as it was. We don't often work much below one-fifty, though I know jobs have been done at two hundred and over. But if she rolled, she'd keep on going down to thousands of feet, not hundreds, and that would be curtains for the specie and pearls—and diver!

I don't want to bore you with the diving details. They were interesting, all the same. I had one of these new suits with ball-and-socket joints on the arm and leg coverings, a flanged affair of lightweight metal. Marvelous, really—but you don't want to hear about that.

I CLIMBED down to the wreck, and there she was hanging over this projection from the coral wall, with incredible deeps below her off the edge of a rocky shelf. There were giant weed streamers waving around her, fifty or eighty feet long, as thick as my body, succulent, with great gasbag joints. Also a sort of red flower growing all over the rusty plates of the ship, a nasty-looking flower. I fancy it was one of those undersea flowers that catch and eat passing fish. The ship's funnels must have taken a knock going down, or perhaps she blew her boilers—the funnels were askew. It gave a drunken air to the thing.

She was messed up a good deal inside. The

torpedo had caught her astern and blown a hole you could drive a car through. Girders had fallen, bulkheads collapsed—of course all over the part where the owners said the specie was stowed. I spent some happy days picking my way through, cutting out key bits with an underwater blowlamp, shoring up beams, trying to make it safe. It's all a matter of luck, in a way. You make everything safe, but one roll and the lot will collapse on you.

The first thing I saw floating up from the depths was a whale with a giant squid in its jaws. They eat them, you know, some types of whales do. I'd never seen a fight of that sort before, and it gave me a turn. It came slowly rising from the deeps, a whale I suppose forty or fifty feet long. It had this squid in its mouth and was trying to swallow it. The squid had arms forty feet long, like elephants trunks—six or eight of them. Two of the arms were gripped in the whale's teeth. The rest were clutched round the whale's head, trying to find its eyes. These squids' arms end in thick nails, like a bunch of iron fingers. Not the sort of thing to have feeling for your eyes. In the middle of the arms was the squid's head—a ghastly sort of beak three feet long, I'd say, from the glimpse I got, with two great eyes sticking out. They floated past me and out of sight. I never saw the end of that. I was fascinated, but I didn't think it meant anything to me.

Five minutes later, however, I was climbing round outside the ship's hull when my shoulder-lights showed up a sort of slow-motion shower of monstrous rain coming upwards through the sea. It was dead fishes—fishes of a sort I'd never seen in my life. Ghastly little spiny devils, with eyes on stalks. Look, you'll think I'm telling a fisherman's yarn, but, as true as I'm here, there were *millions* floating up. And they were all dead or dying. I tell you it made me feel funny up and down my back. I was alone down there, a hundred and fifty feet under. It's as silent as the grave. It's dark. It's damned cold. And you feel alone. I can't explain it. More alone than anybody ever felt up in the daylight and the air. They kept drifting up—millions, I tell you. They filled the sea above, below, all round. Mostly dead. Some choking their lives out while I watched.

WHEN a deep-diver sees something like that, do you know what he asks him-



## UP FROM THE DEPTHS

self? He says: 'Why's this?' And he answers quick—or else . . .

I knew what had happened all right, all right. There'd been an undersea crack in the ocean bed, miles down. Volcanic, probably. It does happen in those parts off the Great Barrier. Something had cracked away down there below, and something had gone wrong, and something had fetched adrift.

I knew damn well what I ought to do. I ought to call the surface and get pulled up pronto—because nasty things happen when ocean foundations begin to crack. But look, I'm curious, like other folks. Fact is, I'm damned curious, and it's got me into hot water several times. I wanted to see what else might drift up. I'd heard old divers' yarns. Queer things fetch adrift when there's a volcanic crack—very queer things indeed. Well, let's cut it short—I got out of the wreck as if the devil was after me and got on my feet on solid coral.

Nothing happened for five minutes, and I began to call myself a fool. The fish had thinned out. The water looked more or less ordinary. A bit muddy, maybe, but that often happens for no special reason at all. And then, without a sound, of course, and without any warning, I saw something that stopped the breath in my mouth.

There was something floating up beside the wreck. It was about sixty feet long, this rising thing, and it had a great green beard, and flat greenish plates for eyes. I tell you, that thing was half-transparent. I could see its organs pulsing and swelling and flooding inside it, as if it was made of melting ice. And this great seaweed beard swept and lashed about under its belly, whether in rage or pain I don't know, like huge blackish-green plaits of drowned hair.

I was watching the thing, with my eyes nearly leaping out of my head, when one of these straggles of beard floated my way. A fish attracted by the lights on my shoulders sailed near the beard. There was a sort of whipping coil. The fish was touched, and it was dead. Yes, dead. I think it was electrocuted. A lot of these deep-sea things have electric sting-rays, you know, and some can harm or kill a man. The fish sort of stuck on to the ray and was drawn into the beard. The next minute I saw it dimly in the thing's digestive organs. I told you that it was transparent. There was the fish, dead, rolling over and over inside, in a grotesque sort of

copy of its swimming movements when alive.

I crouched on the coral. I didn't dare to move. I guessed that a sixty-footer could eat a six-footer as easily as it could eat a little fish. I didn't fancy myself swimming about inside that ghastly thing. It floated out of my sight, and I didn't see it again.

I'm free to admit it gave me a shaking. I didn't like it. It wasn't natural. I've seen some queer fish one time and another in fifteen years of deep work. But that thing wasn't a fish of the sort we know. It had come up out of the depths, shifted I guess by this undersea eruption or whatever it was. I didn't like it.

**I** WAS just wondering whether to get back to my work or to call them to haul me up for a breather when something else appeared floating up beside me.

You won't believe me—nobody does, except a zoologist professor I met in Sydney afterwards. I've forgotten his moniker. Sir Somebody Something, a big bug in his own way. He believed me. He did more. He went nearly crazy. He said I'd seen something—something -orus, he called it—that used to exist a few million years back. He wanted to get government funds and go out and try for it again. He made me a pretty good offer—if he really had the cash, and these government boys can always raise it from somewhere. But I said: 'No, sir!' No! Once was enough for me. I'm a quiet sort of man.

It came floating up without a sound, and, believe it or not as you like, it was as big as an island. Yes, I thought it was impossible, too. Because, you see, it was alive. It was bigger than the biggest whale, several hundred feet across. Its body was muddy brown, peppered with spots the dead-white of a fish's belly. And those spots were transparent, as if whatever the thing was hadn't quite solidified.

It had a bloated shapelessness that made me not sure whether it was a fish or an animal. The fact is it gave me a horrible feeling that it was something not finished—something still in the making. It looked as if it had been roughly torn off the first original heap of life, as if it was unformed. I only realised that it wasn't just a vast heap of floating mud by the fact of its insistent breathing. Its edges were vague like mud, and they seemed to ooze away or heap up while I watched.

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It's easy enough to laugh and say I imagined it. I didn't imagine it. Divers see enough oddities, I can tell you. They don't have to imagine things down there. They're damned glad not to imagine things.

This thing bore marks of a sort of dawning first wish to have shape. It had, for instance, a rudimentary head. You could say its head was a bit like a frog's, except that it was as big as a fishing-smack. It had a kind of sketchy beginning of a jaw ending in a ghastly little red pouting mouth. Two cartloads of phosphorescent slime heaved where eyes ought to be, though obviously they were blind. And there were growths of bony fringe along the back, big enough to tear the bottom out of a liner; they seemed to have some of the functions of fins. It didn't make a sound. And its indeterminate shape and helpless movements gave no sign that it had feeling of any sort.

But I'll tell you this. It was cold. It was cold with a sort of coldness there hadn't ever been in any undersea place I'd got to. The nearest that thing came to me was fifty feet away, and yet I was so cold—inside my suit, mind you—that my teeth chattered and I thought I should die. My hands and feet went numb. I couldn't make my jaws work to ask to be pulled up. I felt that the thing was in agony, and I felt that the cold was some sort of emanation from it. Oh, what's the use. I can't tell you how it shook me, how I felt I should die if I had to watch it much longer.

Then it began to sink. It went down very slowly. As it sank, from somewhere underneath it floated up groups and strings of bubbles about the size of my head. They were vivid red and blue and green. I never saw such colours, like strings of toy balloons shining in some undersea sun. They were not quite round; they had vaguely-fishy shapes.

Whether they were fish or not, parasitic fish perhaps, I don't know. Perhaps they were some sort of roe forced out by the frightful difference in pressure miles up here near the surface. They could have been some sort of breath, or even gouts of varicoloured blood. I couldn't tell. As soon as I saw them they began to burst, leaving nothing but ghostly stains of colour in the deep sea.

But just about then I could detect a stench. Oh, yes, my suit and helmet were waterproof all right, all right, or I shouldn't be alive today. But there are smells that go through

material that water can't penetrate. I believe there might be smells that go through steel walls, after smelling that. It was a sort of marshy smell, cold, gassy, deathly. Something that didn't belong to our world. Something that made you understand that we're only mites that creep about the skin of the orange, and there's all sorts of things we don't know hidden away down deep.

For a long time after the thing had sunk out of my sight those coloured bubbles kept floating up to burst. You'd think they were pretty, but they weren't. They were horrible. They turned my guts to water.

As soon as I could, I spoke through the telephone and told them to get me up. They stuck me in the decompression chamber, of course. You have to go in there if you don't want the bends and perhaps to lose your life. When you've been down deep, I mean. But I don't remember anything about that.

I was unconscious, and it was an hour before I came round. And then I didn't tell them what I'd seen. I had the savvy to keep my big mouth shut. I didn't want to be taken for a fool, or to have them think I was going crazy. Deep-divers do go loony, you know, if they stick at it too many years. But I wasn't crazy any more than I am now. I know what I saw—and, of course, I've been down since. In fact, I finished off the job there and we got the pearls and most of the dollars as well.

The prof in Sydney didn't think I was loony, either. He knew what it was I'd seen, though I can't recall the name he gave it—some of these long scientific handles in Latin, so far as I could make it. He knew the thing all right, all right.

But I wasn't going diving down to look for it for him or anybody else. Not if he'd offered me a million. For two reasons. One, he won't get it up, and no diving-suit yet made could get down a tenth of the way to where that thing lives. I'm certain of it. He thought I was wrong about an undersea eruption having blown it upwards. He thought it was what he called a normal periodic reproductive movement. Normal periodic bosh. He didn't feel that cold; he didn't almost die because of the way that thing hurt. And there's the other reason. I've seen it once and I'm still around to tell the tale. But I'm not a fool. I don't stretch out my neck too far. Once is enough. It's dark down there. Dark and cold. I'll die when I've got to, but I'd sooner die up here. Yes! Once is enough!

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## Science at Your Service

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### FOR REMOVING RUST

**A** CHEMICAL rust-removing product, hitherto supplied to industry only, is now available in 4-ounce packs for ordinary household use. It is a liquid product which is claimed not only to remove rust, but also to leave an anti-rust deposit on the treated surface after application. This deposit is a film of phosphate, and there is ample scientific evidence that phosphate coatings give protection against rusting. The chemical may be applied by brushing, or rusted articles may be immersed in it. The treatment does not prevent or make more difficult the subsequent application of paint, cellulose, or other surface finishes, its primary purpose being to prepare rusty surfaces for painting, etc.

### AN INVALID BEAKER

A most interesting drinking-vessel now being produced will be a boon to many invalids and their nurses. It is made from plastic material of low heat conductivity. It is in two parts. The lower is of normal beaker shape; the upper screws into this and may be briefly described as an inbuilt lid with three small holes placed equidistantly. The patient can safely drink from a prone position, for the liquid in the lower part can only flow through one of these holes—whichever is in the lowest position—and there is no risk of spilling. The edge of the upper or lid portion is bell-shaped to facilitate drinking. The beaker will hold half-a-pint of liquid. It is undoubtedly an improvement upon the spouted feeding-cups sometimes used in sick-rooms. A minor advantage is its much smaller risk of breakage if dropped. It should also be useful for people who have permanently or temporarily lost their sight; nor would it be out of place in factory first-aid kits for service as a drinking-vessel in shock treatment after accidents. Here is another example of intelligent design taking advantage of the mouldable nature of plastic materials to produce not merely an imitation of some existent article but an entirely new article with new virtues.

### A WING-NUT

A die-cast wing-nut made from zinc alloy may displace the familiar steel wing-nut in many uses. One advantage offered is that the zinc alloy is rustproof. The wings carry surface recesses for ensuring firmer finger-grip when tightening. Any standard finish may be applied to the alloy used. The new nuts are made to close tolerances with clean-cut threads; nine standard sizes are at present available.

### A GARDENING STOOL

A new type of stool to take some of the fatigue out of gardening for elderly or perhaps over-stout people is surely a most kindly invention. It has a hardwood base that can be placed flat upon the soil or lawn; at each end looped supports, made of rust-proof, stove-enamelled tubular steel, rise vertically and give firm support to the user when getting up or down from kneeling on the wooden base. A comfortable kneeling position is obtained if a rubber pad or suitable cushion is placed along the base. With the addition of raisers, which can be fitted or supplied separately, the kneeler may be raised to give clearance over a seed-bed. The stool can be used for resting between weeding or other garden jobs if placed in an opposite position, when the supports act as legs for the base, then functioning as the seat of a normal stool. In this position it can also be used as an occasional table, or as a step, for such jobs as pruning and tying-in.

### AN INSECTICIDAL EGG

A nest-egg which contains a volatile insecticide toxic to poultry pests is being considerably used by poultry-keepers and breeders. The egg releases the vapour through a small vent-hole when the sitting bird warms the egg. It is said that one such egg remains effective for a year, and that one should be used for every six birds. One egg per nesting-box is claimed to keep fowls pest-free. The price of this ingenious article is very moderate indeed.

## CHAMBERS'S JOURNAL

### MORE ABOUT ALGÆ

In January of this year Californian research-work developing a combined system of algæ-growth and sewage-disposal was discussed in this feature. Since then a survey of world research in algaculture has been made by a famous scientific institution, and it is apparent that the cultivation of algæ for food is much closer to reality and large-scale operation than is generally appreciated. Algæ are unicellular organisms, perhaps more familiarly known as the tiny round and flattish plants that often spread over the surfaces of ponds. There are many varieties of algæ, but the one most likely to be developed as a food-crop is *Chlorella*, a variety not unlike these pond algæ. Algæ absorb sunlight for their energy like land plants, and they similarly take in carbon dioxide by photosynthesis, converting the carbon into organic substances. *Chlorella* cropping can be easily achieved. A simple liquid medium containing nitrates and mineral nutrients, a mixture of air with about 5 per cent of carbon dioxide, and sunlight are the three main needs. There are no stringent requirements of sterile conditions as with the growth of moulds for producing antibiotics. Algæ are robust and fairly insensitive organisms and they multiply their numbers rapidly if given their elementary living-conditions. Tanks or concrete troughs can be used as cropping-vessels.

Solar energy is assimilated by algæ with maximum efficiency at low illumination intensities, a special property that has probably evolved from their aquatic nature. This fact has been utilised in developing a system for high-yield production. The liquid medium containing growing algæ can be deep and it can be agitated constantly so that each organism receives direct sunlight intermittently. It is now believed that an acre of algaculture can reasonably produce a crop of 17½ tons. The whole crop is edible, unlike agricultural crops in which the roots or the foliage are generally inedible; moreover, the crop is composed of 50 per cent protein, a proportion unequalled by any land crop. It is estimated that an area of about the size of the county of Dorset could, if devoted wholly to algaculture, produce enough protein a year to supply every person in the world with 30 daily grammes of protein. Algaculture is being closely studied to-day in the United States, Israel, Japan, and Britain. It has passed the preliminary research stage and

pilot-scale production systems are being set up. Algæ as food for humans and animals is no longer a fancy of the very distant future.

### BOATS WITH WINGS?

A new development in boat design is being energetically pioneered in America. Hydrofoils, or wings that lift the body of the boat or ship above the water surface, make much higher speeds at lower power-consumption possible. Hydrofoils for ships perform not dissimilar functions to those of wings for aircraft. The biggest problem facing hydrofoil development is the attainment of stability and control, and surface-piercing rather than surface-resting hydrofoils are being found to give a much wider range of ship control. Only small vessels at present seem suited to the hydrofoil idea. As the weight of a boat increases, the relative size of the hydrofoils needed increases at a high rate, and a point is reached when the hydrofoils would be too huge to be practicable. A lesser problem is created by the projection of hydrofoils and struts when boats are in harbour or operating near piers, etc., and it is possible that the eventual hydrofoil boats will have retracting gear to pull in the foils or wings when at low speed or stationary. However tentative these comments may sound, the fact remains that already a number of small hydrofoil boats have been experimentally built and successfully operated. At speeds of 40-50 knots they take only half the power needed to drive the normal displacement boat of equivalent size. During the War some use of the hydrofoil principle was made by the German navy for high-speed patrol craft.

### DESIGN FOR SPANKING

U.S. patent number 2,645,488 is a child-beating appliance that automatically protects the parent from excessive zeal. The spanking end is paddle-shaped and, to quote from the patent, is 'of sufficient area to contact a substantial area of the rump of a child.' It has a breakaway handle, however, and if used above a certain degree of forcefulness the paddle end abruptly dangles from released tapes. Spare the child and spoil the rod would seem to be the principle underlying this latest addition to the list of automatically-controlled appliances. We do not mention this invention because it is in fact available; it seemed an instance of 20th-century ingenuity and psychology too unusual to be ignored.



## SCIENCE AT YOUR SERVICE

### QUICKER BOLTING

An new patent type of bolt should save many hours of labour in building. It can be hammered through timber, for the bolt has a false tip or nail-point. When the end of the bolt protrudes through the other side of the timber-sections being joined, the false point is removed and a nut can then be placed on the threaded end of the bolt. The false tips are reusable. They protect the thread while the bolt is being hammered through timber, for the diameter of the tip is greater than that of the threaded section of the bolt. These bolts are made in diameters of from  $\frac{3}{16}$  to  $\frac{5}{8}$  of an inch, and in lengths of from 2 to 20 inches. The normal type of thread is British Standard Whitworth, but American or Metric Thread can be supplied to order. These bolts are now available to the home market and for export.

### OIL REGENERATION

The problem of reusing lubricating oils has long challenged industry, and a German plant and process claiming to regenerate used oils is being made in Britain. It is giving economical results in factories where large quantities of lubricating oils are used. These oils cease to be effective through the accumulation of colloidal carbon and soot particles, water, and various products of chemical decomposition. In the German process the used oil is first heated and any water in the oil is drawn off; then a polymerising agent—a chemical (sulphuric acid) that encourages the formation of larger molecules—is added, and the products of decomposition are by this means converted into solid, asphalt-like substances that not only emerge as a precipitate, but in doing so also carry down with them the soot and carbon particles in the oil. The oil is then passed through a specially fine filter-bed with powerful adsorbent properties. A single plant, operable by an unskilled worker will regenerate 2500 gallons of oil at a cost of about £70. The major item of cost is the filter-bed material, described as a special type of fuller's earth. It is said that these plants were widely used by the Germans in their Navy and Air Force and in industry.

### A NEW MOP

A broom-shaped appliance that scrubs, mops, dries, and polishes is being demonstrated at British exhibitions this year. The main contacts with floors or other surfaces are made with the rectangular block of highly-absorbent sponge, but above this and projecting laterally a bristle brush is carried, so that it is only necessary to reverse the appliance and all contact is made with the brush. The sponge holds soap-powder or detergent solutions with high efficiency; if too much soap-powder or detergent is used, the aerating action of the sponge will produce excessive foam. After use in floor-washing, the sponge can be pressed dry, and it is then available as a drying appliance; for this purpose, it is run lightly over the floor and all excess moisture will be absorbed. The brush section is available for special use on rough surfaces or where a hard deposit must be removed in floor-cleaning. The appliance can be used without any hand-contact with dirty water—all wringing-out operations can be carried out by exerting pressure upon the sponge from the handle. Sponge replacements are available and can be quite simply fitted.

### A DOMESTIC BALANCE

One of the best-known British makers of weighing-instruments has recently brought on the market a new domestic model. The substantial base, which makes the scales almost impossible to upset even when knocked, and the scoop are made of polystyrene plastic. The dial, graduated in 1-oz. units up to 10 lb., is sloped for easy reading and enclosed in transparent polystyrene. The scoop is designed for dual-purpose use, for it is graduated in fluid ounces and pints to serve also as a volume measure. The weighing mechanism is specially designed to withstand shocks without loss of accuracy, but in any case the producers' reputation in the whole field of weighing-instruments is a reliable guide to the actual efficiency of the appliance. Its main features are its design for maximum service in the kitchen and its attractive appearance. It is finished in cream and chocolate.

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TO CORRESPONDENTS who wish fuller information regarding new inventions, publications, etc. mentioned here, addresses will be furnished, when possible, if (and only if) a stamped addressed envelope or postcard for a reply be sent to the Editor, *Chambers's Journal*, 11 Thistle Street, Edinburgh. To avoid delays, requests of this kind from correspondents abroad will be forwarded to the manufacturer or agent if stamps, postal orders, or imperial or international reply coupons are enclosed for the purpose. The issue of the *Journal* and the heading of the paragraph in which the object of inquiry is described should be given in order to facilitate reference.

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## Your Plants Really Live

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**I** THINK that it is a good thing in the winter to read all one can about gardening. During the last thirty years I have found tremendous pleasure in studying horticulture, and there is no doubt that we do better with our plants when we know something about them. Do not look askance at science. It lies behind all our work.

Did you know that in the case of leaves there is a skin covering which is known as the epidermis. It consists of a single layer of cells which fit quite closely together, except at certain definite points on the undersides of the leaves where there are breathing-pores called stomata. Each one of these stomata has two guard cells, which can regulate the amount of air breathed inwards, as well as regulate the amount of water-vapour which is given off by transpiration. I always liken transpiration in plants to perspiration in human beings.

It is most important that these stomatas should work properly, and therefore a keen gardener sees to it that they are not blocked up by soot, or damaged by red spiders and thrips. The stomata can be closed by rusts and mildews, so it is extremely important to control all pests and diseases properly. It has been said that it is necessary to use sprays with force. As a matter of fact, the great thing is to use a detergent with the wash as a spreader, so that the fungicide is distributed evenly all over the epidermis and so kills the disease.

The roots are very similar in construction to the stems, and at a short distance from the root-tips there are large numbers of elongated cells, which we gardeners call root-hairs. These cells are very thin indeed, and can be said to be covered with no skin at all. Thus they can quickly absorb plant-foods, when these are in solution, and can pass them on to the stem. It is important that the solution outside in the soil should not be too strong, or else the dilution in the cells will be sucked out, because the cell covering is permeable. Thus the gardener learns never to give overdoses of plant-foods of any kind. He must always administer exactly what is needed, and no more.

Though the flower may be beautiful, it is really there to bear seeds. It is what is called the reproductive part of the plant. A flower may be complicated in its construction, but those who are growing blooms as cut flowers for the house must always be careful to do the cutting early, before the flowers turn to seed. Furthermore, the moment some of the stems on a plant are allowed to go to seed the plant itself is, so to speak, quite happy, because it has done its job, and so it is not as keen to produce other flowers. It pays, therefore, to cut off the seed-pods as soon as they start to form.

Just as human beings have to breathe, so do plants, and, as well, all parts of a plant need air. Thus if you are growing a pot-plant in the house and you overwater it, the roots cannot breathe. When seeds are buried too deeply in the soil, they may not be able to breathe. With most plants that we have to deal with the products of the breathing may be said to be carbon dioxide gas and water. As the carbon is obtained from inside the plant, the process may be described as destructive, but, and this is a very big but, a process takes place during the daytime when the leaf holds itself out to the sun and then the carbon is assimilated from the air, and it is the sunlight which fixes this carbon in the leaves. This is the process the scientists call photosynthesis. It shows the importance of sunshine and the importance of having good healthy leaves to do the work.

Light and sun-heat are, of course, two quite different factors. The Bible makes this clear when we read, 'God said, Let there be light'; it was only later that the sun was created. With no light there is spindliness; with light there is sturdiness. In fact, it is the reaching out for the light that often makes for the weakness and length of growth in a greenhouse with dirty panes of glass.

I shall be glad to help readers with their gardening problems. Write to me through the Editor, kindly enclosing a stamped addressed envelope for the reply.

W. E. SHEWELL-COOPER, M.B.E., N.D.H.

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